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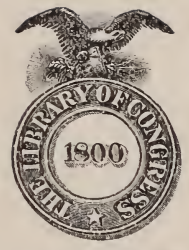
SUNDAY TALKS TO TEACHERS

HELEN WODEHOUSE



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SUNDAY TALKS TO TEACHERS

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SUNDAY TALKS TO TEACHERS

BY

HELEN WODEHOUSE, D.PHIL.

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	Guides and Light-Bringers	7
II.	The Yoke	22
III.	The Good Day	33
IV.	God the Prisoner	41
V.	Opportunities	53
VI.	Childishness	67
VII.	Powers of Darkness	80
VIII.	Witnesses	91
IX.	The Strength of the Lord	97
X.	The Desire for Experience	112

SUNDAY TALKS TO TEACHERS

I

GUIDES AND LIGHT-BRINGERS

I WILL introduce my subject by reminding you of part of a poem by A. E. Housman:

"Look left, look right, the hills are bright,
The vales are light between,
Because 'tis fifty years to-night
That God has saved the Queen.

Now, while the flame they watch not towers
About the land they trod,
Lads, we'll remember friends of ours
Who shared the work with God."

It is this last thought that I need; the thought of a divine work shared by human beings. The soldiers share with God the work of defence; the farmers that of "causing the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man"; the creative workers, from the artisan to the artist and poet, share the primal work of making the world. What is there for the teachers?

I think we can find a description, beautiful enough, of the work in which our share is ap-

pointed. I take it from the first chapter of St. Luke: *"To give light to them that sit in darkness . . . and to guide . . . into the way of peace."*

I

Even from a child's point of view, this is a fair description of the work of a good school. One small picture it brings to my mind is that of arithmetic lessons in the Upper Fourth when I was thirteen years old. I had studied decimals before I went to school, and had found it like groping among hard sharp objects in a dark room. The school course now threw into these dark places such a flood of light that I moved securely in a transformed world. I did not use those words, but for years afterwards I cared chiefly for that quality in a teacher,—the power of making things "clear." Since then I have come to value other kinds of light also: that which comes, for instance, from the wide knowledge or the keen imagination of the teacher or the writer, or from his power of inspiration. But the precious book or speech presents itself to me still in the same way, as new light; as making me see something that I had not seen.

The other reference, to the "way of peace," did not suggest itself to me in my school days. At first I was bewildered by all the new expe-

riences, and afterwards it was the amount and vigour of life that impressed me rather than its peacefulness. But, looking back, I see myself guided into greater peace of a very real kind,—childish morbidities swept away, room made for the free growth of any powers I had, instincts flourishing in a keener air than that of the home school-room. Mine was a big town day-school, with no games or playground, and with scarcely any social life, and its range of subjects was narrow, though the chief of them were taught very well. A modern school with its wider activities would do still more for most of its children.

When a teacher of infants helps a little child to learn the use of its unknown powers and the management of its bewildering impulses,—leading it towards self-mastery, co-ordinating into a wider and richer life the forces that pull it hither and thither, releasing it from the bondage and the storms of babyhood, and preparing it to deal victoriously with new difficulties as they come,—she is most surely working as a guide towards peace. And, at the other end, we are to do this work not only for the individual but for the nation. How can the great and hard business of the Commonwealth be carried on if its citizens are uneducated and untrained? or how can the national life be rich where minds are narrow and impulses are

merely tumultuous or merely starved? Consider all the intricate headwork which must be done, and the wise and patient public opinion which must come into being, if the nations are to find the way even of outward international peace. If we have part of the task of preparation for this, we could hardly choose higher work to share with God.

Perhaps it would not be too fanciful to distinguish the two sides in the text. One teacher is interested chiefly in the bringing of light; he is not only a teacher but a lifelong student of truth, and his work will expand along the lines of scholarship. Another will care chiefly for the work of guidance,—not the scholar's side of teaching but the pastoral side. He will carry it further along the lines of social work, with growing skill in dealing with human beings and growing care for humanity. There is no need to say, and no possibility of saying, that one of these types is better than the other. Each will be specially fitted for certain special posts, and both are imperatively needed by the nation.

II

This, then, is our incredibly high calling. How far do we fall short! I need not describe the obstacles that we all share—weakness of flesh,

dulness of spirit, conflicting duties. Nor need I say much now of the conditions which have to be satisfied, except for one thing which I fear I must have reiterated with you to the point of weariness, which yet I would repeat once more. The essential condition seems to me always to be this—that we should keep alive ourselves.

If we are to continue to teach we must somehow continue to grow. In one way or another we must go on breaking new ground: in scholarship, in knowledge of the world and sympathy with it, in friendliness and helpfulness towards human beings, in acquaintance with God. Not all these ways are necessary for all (except in some sense the last), but every real teacher must use one or two, and must go on using them. When we begin our professional lives we may be careless through thinking that there is plenty of time ahead; but very soon for most people the obstacle arises from the opposite thought, that there is no time left. At some age far short of thirty we find ourselves saying that it is too late to arrange for growing now; that our formative time is finished; that now we must go on as we are and live on our capital to the end. I was reckoning the other day that it would be twenty years this summer since I left school. I reflected on all that had happened to me since then, and on the different

person that I had become; and I was assuming, as one usually does, that the small remainder of my life would be lived by the person who now was myself; that no change or growth worth speaking of would happen in future. And then it struck me that, though I have twenty years of grown-up life behind me, in all probability I have a good deal more than twenty years of work ahead of me; that the time for growth and change in front was actually more than the time that had passed. So with that reflection it seemed well worth while to begin to learn a new subject.

Sometimes we say to ourselves, "I need not learn any more because I know quite enough for the purpose of teaching." Sometimes, on the other hand, we say, "My time and strength are so small that it is no use to try. I could never learn enough to make any difference." On the side of character we have a better philosophy. We do not say, "My morals, or my religion, or my general civilisation, are far enough already in advance of my pupils"; nor do we say, "it is no use to try, because I could never improve enough to make any difference." On this side we see at once that these statements are so irrelevant as to be almost blasphemous. But they are equally irrelevant on the intellectual side. Whether for intellect or for character, the essential question is

never "How far advanced are you?" nor yet "How far can you advance in a year?" but always, "Which way is your face turned?" An earthly authority appointing a teacher has to ask, "What have you learnt?" and "What have you done?" but the divine authority asks, "What are you doing now?" It asks not, "How many works of merit have you accumulated under the Law?" but "Are you now living in the Spirit?" "In character or in mind, is your will turned to go forward?" "Are you now alive?"

"To give light to them that sit in darkness." If our faces *now* are not turned towards the light of life, we ourselves are in the extreme darkness, the "shadow of death." It is a barren and limited work, and an arrogant claim, for one to enlighten others who is in that shadow himself. But, however low and however weak we are, to escape from that shadow we have only to turn round.

III

Are we arrogant anyhow when we take that text to ourselves? Are we justifying the popular complaint of the conceit and self-sufficiency of teachers? The accusation should be far from the truth if we are working rightly, for any truth that it has depends on our being dead. So far as we are alive, in touch ourselves with the Light and

with the Way, there will be no danger of our lacking humility.

In the first place, we shall become humble through our personal touch with the things of which we are the servants. So long as we go on learning we shall not be conceited about what we have learnt. Only when we cease to learn, and our acquired knowledge turns set and stiff, can we make of it a pedestal to stand on. The typical scholar is not an arrogant person. I have seen somewhere a story of a great mathematical teacher and discoverer, whose name was given to a theorem which he was the first to work out. When in his teaching he came to that point, he said, "And now we come to the theorem whose name I have the honour to bear." The epitaph on Lewis Nettleship in Balliol College chapel is a classical description of the light-bringer who himself is turned towards the light: "He loved great things, and thought little of himself: desiring neither fame nor influence, he won the devotion of men and was a power in their lives: and, seeking no disciples, he taught to many the greatness of the world and of man's mind."

There is a temptation known at times to most of us, to think so much of giving a good lesson that we do not trouble enough to make sure that what we are teaching is true. A corresponding

snare is near at hand when we are pleased with the exercise of personal influence and proud of guiding others; or, worse still, when we enjoy tyranny over others. These evils have been vividly described of late years, in various novels which aim at showing the dangers of our profession. These temptations are real and may come to us at any time, but they overcome us not in our "living" times but in the times of the shadow of death; and to keep ourselves alive by keeping in touch with what we serve is a very fair safeguard against them. A teacher like other men becomes small and arrogant and complacent when, and because, he has ceased to "love great things." The fault is not incident to our profession alone.

Indeed, the better the education that is going on, the less likely is it that the teacher's person will fill the landscape. The Montessori teacher, we are told, must spend most of her time in obliterating herself. And every good teacher with a reasonable chance is providing materials and books, and quiet hours for study, and individual schemes, and self-government, and good customs of all kinds, which, all put together, are to do more for his pupils than he could ever do in his own person. His work, like that of almost every one else in the modern world, consists chiefly in serving by indirect and impersonal means. The

modern business of light-bringing depends less often on carrying a torch than on putting in electric wires. Or if the daylight is in question, the way to increase it is chiefly concerned with the reduction of smoke in the atmosphere; and that depends on turning coal into gas and persuading people to use it, and on inventing and building smoke-consuming chimneys and making mechanical stokers, and on setting up communal kitchens to reduce the number of kitchen fires. None of the servants of these causes will have much attention concentrated on his person, or be led to think overmuch of himself. So also little guidance is given now by pointing with the finger, and much by setting up sign-posts and keeping roads in repair, and printing monthly tables of trains. So also it is with the teaching profession.

IV

In the second place, when we are real teachers we learn humility through knowing our pupils. We find that the Light and the Way are not quite the same for any one of them as for ourselves. We give only such help as we can; they take of it only what they can. Our service is likely to reduce itself to giving them just light enough to find means to other light, or putting them into a

path which will lead to another road which is not ours. I have been specially impressed with this in matters of religion. In my own memories of seeking help in religious difficulties in youth, and in later experiences of trying to help in the difficulties of other people, I have seemed to find again and again that an older person can never give to a younger one exactly what he needs. The most we can usually hope is that some scrap of a suggestion may be a little help in combining with other things to enable the younger person to get a little nearer to finding what he needs for himself. And what is true of religion is true of every other important kind of enlightenment and guiding. The teacher's light, for the pupil, is seldom more than a distant street lamp shining dimly through his window. Along with other sources of light, it may enable him after some time to find the position of one of the electric switches in his room.

Indeed, it is on this that we come rightly to lay stress. It is just as well that we cannot give our pupils a candle ready lighted to carry about with them, for their needs go so far beyond the power of a candle. The only thing worth hoping is that we may help them towards light-finding, or light-making, or road-engineering for themselves. We know this is true in intellectual train-

ing; it is no less true in matters of conduct. We can give no penny candle—no little sufficient rules to be carried about. If the working out of truth and righteousness is an intricate and solitary business in our own living experience, will it not be the same for our children? If we are still seekers ourselves, we shall be in little danger of patronising those who are beginning the search.

V

We shall be humble towards that which we serve, and towards those whom we teach, and, in the third place, towards all that universe which works together with us, and in which our work is so small a part.

We are fellow-workers with the past generations. We did not invent reading and writing, or discover history and geography, or work out the laws of number and space. We did not even create the means of teaching, the books and the schools; nor, on the whole, did even our profession create them. Who made the orderly nation and the system of government which enables these things to exist? Who worked out the moral laws, and set up the great sign-posts which now we show to the children? The world and the age have entrusted us with one focus of their desire to pass on their work. We are gatherers-up and

transmitters of what we did not make—of what came first from Nature, and then from millions who rest in "unvisited tombs." And the universe, which honours us thus, first made us.

We are fellow-workers with the present—with our pupils' homes and their neighbours and their country—and fellow-workers with the future. We teach our children to read, and others write and will write the books for them. We bring them a little light by which they may find their way to other light not brought by us. I bless my own school for what it did for me, yet I have no single possession which I can attribute to the school alone, much less to any one teacher. They helped to open doors for me, and with other help I found what was beyond the doors. So, now that we are teachers, we find that no single piece of work is ours alone; that no line can be drawn anywhere round what "we" have done. If we bring light, it melts into the light that others bring. If we guide, it is usually in one respect only, for a moment only, and then the help is found in other guidance than ours. We have a special gift to bring, but we shall not exaggerate its importance, though it is our business to bring it. The best light "lighteth every man" even though our work fails.

If we try to isolate our own work, its success seems indeed unstable enough:

"When Andrew went a-fishing
All night in Galilee,
Dawn would bring him a heavy net,
Or five fish, or three:
It was just as the sea would have it,
And fisherman's luck, said he.

After, he went a-fishing
For wilder fish than of yore,
And many straining netfuls
He drew in to shore.
But at last they hung him cross-wise:
Fisherman's luck once more.

. . . . . .

All ye that go a-fishing
Know this of the patient art:
Eight nights' harvest may break your nets,
And the ninth break your heart."*

. . . . . .

But the thought is not complete without another hymn:

"Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong;
Finish what I begin
And all I fail of win.
What matter I or they,
Mine or another's day?"

. . . . .

It need not make us less zealous to hope for that, and it should make us less feverish. No

*Rose Macaulay.

man, and above all no teacher, begins or carries on his work by himself, or finishes it himself. It is carried on by all nature and all humanity, before us and after us.

Have we not to mean at least this, if we say that we share the work with God?

II

THE YOKE

"Take my yoke upon you"—MATTHEW xi, 29.

IN one way or another, in some sense or other, all of us have obeyed that command. We obeyed it when we were born. We obeyed it at the beginning of the year; we obey it again at the end of every holiday, and every Monday morning, and every day.

In taking a post we say sometimes that we take up the "burden" of duties and responsibilities; but a yoke is a peculiar kind of burden in that its burden-ness—its mass or weight—is a secondary quality. The yoke is not merely something that we struggle with and pull at,—it enables us to pull something else. It is *an instrument for doing work.* The Spirit that works through the minds of men has devised the institutions which help to make a nation so different from a mere collection of individuals. Posts and professions have been devised, governments and appointments and local authorities, schools and colleges and classes

and examinations; and all these, in their intention, are instruments for doing work. They are inventions for getting work done which by mere impulsive application either could not be done so well or would not be done so certainly. The *machinery* of the State, we call them in modern times—they are yokes, in the language of a time whose instruments of industry were fewer and simpler. Putting on the yoke, we become part of the machine, part of the plough; committed, so long as we wear it, to going on, to walking in the line of greatest resistance. Offices and trades, membership of a society or a committee, marriage and motherhood, are instruments of service and potential compulsions to service.

In the first place, they are instruments of service. Most of us, sometimes and in some part of our life at any rate, want to do good. A horse might stand in a field and want to do good for long enough, had not collar and harness and plough been invented and provided for him. Trades and schools and colleges and the forms of family life were invented before our day, and we enter into them. The machinery of the State, as truly as churches and altars, stands within the spiritual world. If we approach it with the mind of Christ, then it is Christ's yoke we are taking upon us.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." We learn from the spiritual Christ again and again by means of the yoke itself. Professional tradition and professional compulsion guide and train us, and keep us in the right path when our private wisdom or our private resolution would fail. The yoke defends us against our own idleness and slackness; making us get up in the morning, making us go out in the rain, teaching us every day the routine steadiness and thoroughness in which the average professional worker outdoes the average amateur. It is not only a burden but an anchor; something solid to hold to; something by which we may save ourselves from self-absorption and morbidity and the "weight of chance desires." The struggling Spirit within us responds to the guiding and compelling Spirit embodied outside us. God besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us.

We learn by means of the yoke; we learn also, so far as we will, the way in which followers of Christ ought to deal with the yoke. "Not grudgingly, or of necessity." The yoke compels us to go a mile; without it perhaps we should not have gone half a mile; with it we are to try to go two miles on some days at any rate. To go beyond, to transcend compulsion, to give generously—these things we learn through secret thoughts and

through bright examples, and we try to practise them a little sometimes.

But there is yet another kind of learning which most workers need sooner or later. The yoke symbolises the means of service and the enlargement of life through service, but it symbolises also the constraint and hardness and heaviness which are involved in serviceable living. Monday morning and the end of the holidays do not stand always for pleasant thoughts. How are we to deal with this constraint?

I do not refer so specially to the unhappiness that may attend the first beginning of teaching work. The first few months can, of course, be a terribly hard time, but some of that hardness will never come again. The wave may overwhelm us, but it does pass; we do in the end find our feet and get our heads up; and the second year will be very different from the first. Some troubles, on the other hand, never do pass permanently, and I wish to speak of these particularly now.

Few persons can be so fortunate as not to feel from time to time that their work, or the routine of their lives, or some incidental feature of these, is hateful to them. They may feel it after some years in their profession, when the first keen interest is gone, or at intervals even from the be-

ginning. Some of the best and most promising workers may suffer most, since the rich and spirited nature which has most to give to the work is also the nature which finds it hardest to endure the work's limits. But almost all of us, good or bad, suffer more or less from this mood in which we cannot bear to go on. The mood is not constant, mercifully, but it will probably be recurrent even up to old age.

The rebellion of heart comes to some as intolerance of the boredom and restraint. To others it comes rather as fear. These can tolerate the monotony of routine, which indeed attracts them at times as something safe and restful—it is the roughness and the hard demands of life they shrink from. Sometimes unhappiness concentrates itself upon their own inadequacy to these demands. They are doing the work badly, they feel; they cannot manage it; they see all the holes and rough places in their weaving. To a nature which is sensitive to ideals this mood may come terribly often, especially if there is really some fault of adjustment between the worker and the task.

Sometimes, on the other hand, life seems pointless and empty, not because we are filling our place badly, but because any one else (so we feel) could fill it equally well. There may be

illusion here, but it is mixed with a very real trouble. The world has much work to be done which can be shared indifferently amongst many people, and it is this indifference of the yoke that is sometimes so hard to bear. It is in this respect chiefly that married persons may have a definite advantage over the unmarried. The rebellion against routine, and the shrinking from hard demands, are common to both, but the wife whose husband needs her, or the mother whose children depend upon her, is saved for a time from this special bitter sense that she in her own person is not needed. Love makes a station central and unique, and there are deep instincts of our nature at the basis of its demand for centrality and uniqueness. The denial of these instincts, when we take our share of the indifferent work of the world and endure to be without a special office over and above it, is necessarily pain. With most people, fortunately, the trial does not last for ever. A faithful person generally wins to some uniqueness of position in course of time; he finds love or friendship somewhere, or some individual shape of professional work or social service, some special need which no one else could exactly supply. Yet this does not always happen; or it may happen in so subtle and unobtrusive a form that the worker never realises what has

come about. He feels still that he is not uniquely needed; he is doing honourable and necessary work, perhaps, but still work that others could do as well. So periodically the instinct cries out within him and he suffers.

If this form of suffering comes chiefly to unmarried people, one other form is certainly common to all. Every one of us revolts sometimes, not explicitly against the yoke of professional life or family life, but against some incident of our particular state. We could live and work well and happily, we feel, if it were not for this relative of our husband's, for this feature of the place where we have to live, for the absence of this particular thing that we need for our work, for this intolerable characteristic in the people we have to live with. We are really good workers, good members of a family, good members of a staff, but how can we live under these circumstances? And thus every now and then we feel that it is hard to go on.

In considering all this, one must assume, of course, that all the external common-sense things have been done. If we can rightly alter the intolerable feature, we ought to do so. If our lives are too narrow we ought if possible to make them wider. If we are a square peg in a round hole, we should look for a square hole if we

rightly can. But after all these requirements have been met—after common-sense in action and the energy of adjustment have done all that they can rightly do—still much of the difficulty will often remain, and we must go deeper to meet it.

It is some help even to realise what a universal difficulty this is. The mood of revolt against one's life was named fifteen hundred years ago as one of the torments that most easily beset us, and I think I have not known any one myself who has been permanently free from it. We need have no nightmare feeling that the trouble must mean something uniquely wrong with our own circumstances or our own nature. It is universal, and it needs a universal answer. Part of that answer, once more, depends on common-sense; common-sense in dealing with the mood as well as with the outward situation; mental self-help. Much sometimes—occasionally even an amazing amount—can be done by wise treatment of our own mind; by the practice of self-suggestion, for instance, as "mental healers" recommend. But beneath this and supporting it and going beyond it, what can we find to say?

Only that this is life. This is doing one's share in carrying the world. This is the Christ in us taking up the yoke again.

The whole hardness that we shrink from be-

longs to the yoke. It is part of the work, not a hindrance to it. The monotony, the lack of uniqueness, the lack of visible result, the hard class and the difficult companions and the weakness in our own nature, all these are part of the materials. We think of them as hedges we have to climb over before we can reach the field to be ploughed; unsanctified hindrances that pull us back and make us late and spoil our chance in the work that we are here to do. But they are not hedges on the way—they are parts of the field. With just these we have to deal, to work them in to a courageous and faithful life. The God in men who, generation after generation, has carried the burden and ploughed the mountain side, lives now in us that this place may be filled. We learn of him, as he has worked in all who have ever served their generation, and as he works now in our souls.

We are to "learn." These difficulties, outside us and within us, are not things that we ought to be able to deal with easily at once; that we are to blame for not mastering at once. They are the day's lesson and the life's lesson, to be studied bit by bit under the most patient of teachers. On a Monday morning we are not commanded simply to ge the field ploughed, and left to stand shivering before an impossible task. We are just to take up the yoke, of our own body, our own

character, our own circumstance, and then to learn.

"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." We do not use these words often now, but the idea we need has not changed. It is the dropping of fuss and fret and grabbing and inward resistance, and fuming over our private rights and private fears and personal hatreds, and the turning to loyalty, to large-mindedness, to the share in a greater spirit. To learn of him is to try, again and again, to take up every necessary burden in that spirit, and to drop, again and again, all the little burdens of egoistic cares that we need not carry at all. It is to drop our bundles at the foot of that Cross which is erected anew every day, and then to take up the yoke instead. In this spirit we can use its very sharpness and heaviness to keep our learning power awake and growing.

Short of this spirit there is no answer for any of us. If we refuse to learn it, the easiest life in the world becomes intolerable in the end, but we need not refuse. The weakest of us need not refuse; we can learn it in tiny bits, a few minutes at a time, as babies learn. With each morsel that we learn, the end of the text comes true: "Ye shall find rest unto your souls." Here and now, in the middle of work or with work beginning

next week, we can find it. When we lose it, as we shall do many many times, we can turn and find it again.

III

THE GOOD DAY

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise."—PSALM c. 4.

"Defraud not thyself of the good day."—ECCLESIASTICUS xiv. 14.

I

IN past times we used to praise content, but of late years we have not said much about it; we have been too much afraid of seeming to commend the vice that goes by the same name,—the making shift with bad conditions when we ought to change them. Yet in avoiding this vice we may miss the real virtue; the acceptance of good things graciously and gratefully.

We may omit the gracious reception of good things, and become discourteous towards life and grudging towards ourselves, from many causes. One cause is the natural impulse to look forward and lean forward. If what happens to-day does not catch our attention by being unpleasant, we tend to ignore it in favour of what is going to

happen to-morrow. The present, we feel obscurely, is here and can look after itself; we must be looking after what is not yet here. To-day is all very well; to-morrow is really worth thinking about.

Or it may be the cowardly part of our nature which defrauds us of our good days. "Think of the dreadful things that are going to happen or that may be going to happen," it whispers; or "think of all the bad things that have happened or that may have happened." It can always find something to offer us, because it is perfectly true that something always may have happened and always may be going to happen. Our road does wind about in the midst of volcanoes.

Or it may be a twisted scrupulousness that defrauds us. "Surely," it says, "if you are not doing anything unpleasant at the moment, there must be something coming that you ought to be thinking of and preparing for; or something past that you ought to be repenting of and planning to make amends for. It can't be right to have a free mind." Or it reminds us in some form of the old contrast between the steep and narrow path and the primrose way. "Surely," it says, "we must be on the wrong path if we are finding primroses."

None of these suggestions can be answered once

for all in the abstract. Sometimes it is true that we ought to be looking for another path, or preparing for unpleasant things. But often—very often indeed for some of us—this is simply the voice of a bad habit. Often we ought *not* to be counting up volcanoes. We ought not to be working ourselves into a nervous breakdown by looking round continually for undefined duties and worries that we think we must have forgotten. Often we ought to have a free mind, if there is anything in the New Testament references to the glorious liberty of the children of God. And we ought often to be using that free mind in gracious and grateful reception of the good things that life has to give. There are primroses on all paths, and they are often better on the right road than on the wrong, and when they smile at us we ought to smile back at them.

It is often said that grief has lessons to teach us which happiness cannot teach; but the opposite is true also; happiness has lessons of its own. (And we shall not be able to take grief with simplicity when it comes, if meanwhile we are not taking happiness with simplicity.) We have duties of courtesy and attentiveness equally towards both. Being happy, indeed, is itself one of the chief lessons. The power of enjoyment is a great strength and a great charm. The person

who has lost the power of enjoying himself has lost much, and we do lose it if we lose the habit of practising it. If we miss all our chances of freedom of mind and cleanness of mind, if we go on slurring over our times of happiness without being happy in them, then some day they will offer themselves in vain.

So, when good and pleasant things come to us, we are to rise and welcome them with the whole of our heart. They are blessed, and we are blessed in them. We are to enter into the gates of the good day with praise.

II

"With praise and thanksgiving." When things go well with us, we are told we must thank God. But what if we believe that these primroses have bloomed not on our behalf, and not through any intervention from above Nature, but by the ordinary processes of the natural world, by the same indifferent laws which presently will wither the flowers and bring the east wind. How will this bear on the question of thanksgiving? When the good day comes to us, we seem to have a true human impulse in a surging up of thankfulness that needs to go somewhere. If we are honest, are we forbidden to be thankful?

What is implied when we thank a man? Sometimes we imply that he has done this service on purpose to please us; but is this always so? Most of us, probably, have felt grateful to some writer or soldier or statesman who never heard of us.

Again, in our ordinary gratitude, do we always assume the presence of a special and deliberate purpose? We may not put our thanks into words, but our hearts go out to our friends for little casual, inevitable acts which have expressed their characters while they were scarcely attending. We love and thank them for being what they are.

One step more. In the spontaneous impulse of grateful pleasure, are we loving and thanking our friend, or the good book, or the sunny day, and stopping there? I believe not. I suggest this,—that we love and thank *what they are,* what lives in them. I suggest that in actual fact we are recognising and loving not something shut up in an isolated particular person or thing, but something which lives in them and can go beyond them. In them we love and greet love itself, or human kindness, or valour, or wisdom, or beauty and splendour made visible. It is not a mere general abstraction that we praise, but neither is it a merely particular instance. It is the spirit in the body,—the word made flesh.

III

These thoughts seem to leave meaning enough in "thanking God for the good day." Yet if at a certain time of our religious development we distrust the old associations of the words, let us speak instead of "loving the day," and let us see that we put the full meaning into that. Thankfulness is one side of love,—the outgoing generous side as opposed to the element that grasps and pulls at its object to possess it. When we "give thanks" we are loving and not grasping. We are recognising, appreciating, worshipping. We are not demanding that our object shall respond to us in particular, nor that it shall have been designed specially for us. We are loving it gratefully for being what it is. And, in letting our hearts go forth to it, we are not checking and confining them to this as a single thing. We are letting it open our eyes to the soul of all the good in the world. In the sunset or the picture, we worship not that beautiful thing only, but beauty; in the splendid deed we praise courage and splendour, and the spirit of human beings that can reach them. When our moved hearts become philosophic (as I think emotion easily makes them become) so as to feel an identity of soul in every good, they say to that soul in quite instinctive

and natural form, "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory." If in the deepest and fullest sense we are loving the good thing, then in all essentials, in everything but using the ancient name for the "author and giver of all good things," we have already thanked God.

I am not claiming that we can put into this thought of thanksgiving, unchanged, all that a child puts into it before his difficulties arise. The most perfect condition for recognition and love may be that we should meet a mind that is deliberately and specially loving us back. If on a child's birthday there comes a fine day between snowstorms, it must be pleasant to think that this exquisite possession of blue and silver is a birthday present sent straight to him from a godfather in the sky. Yet the humbler and austerer thought of an older mind is worth having. We do not believe that the day is fine because it is our birthday, yet we pause over it and love it: and in it and through it we greet beauty and radiance, and tranquility after storm, and the spirit of "all good things." "He that loveth" does more than get a present from God; he is born of God.

And then, being born of God, we also become authors and givers of good things. We become servants of the spirit of happiness and beauty.

We are to help and protect it and make more room for it; diligently to make the world more beautiful because we have seen the beauty already there; to take pains quickly to make other people happier because we have been happy ourselves.

This is the central gift of a happy time: that in it we may get the better of the churlish and snatching hurry with which we are apt to go through life, head down and eyes blind. We can practise welcome and graciousness, and can smile at the primroses, even if we do not think they are smiling deliberately at us. In the "good day" we can learn to put out an ungrudging hand to join with all the friendliness and loveliness in the world, and to make new ways and windows for it. Trouble will come again soon enough; we shall have sunshine between snowstorms always. But meanwhile we shall have learnt something of looking out for good and entertaining it; of welcoming all of life that we can. Perhaps the parts that we feel it impossible to welcome will become fewer and fewer as we practise more. With every bit of practice we shall gain something at any rate of a recognising and responsive heart, "unfeignedly thankful."

IV

GOD THE PRISONER

"I was in prison, and ye came unto me."—MATT. xxv. 36.

ONE of the commonest categories in our thought is that of chains, bonds, obstacles, things that hinder other things. We could keep our children interested if it were not for the bad ventilation or the noise in the street. We could give our whole mind to our work, but for troubles at home. We could make more friends, but for our awkwardness and shyness; we could keep more, but for defects in our temper or in theirs. We run in weights. We have a double task, always pushing one thing out of the way while we try to deal with another.

Certainly thought of this kind is not always quite accurate or clear. Circumstances hinder our good purposes, we say; but we find sometimes that the fault lies less in outside obstacles than in a defect of the purpose. Our ideal has been too abstract: we are trying to work across the grain of our material, and the hindrances accord-

ingly are endless. Or it may be that the purpose is too narrowly conceived. When we teach, is the stupidity of our pupils a hindrance, or is it an element in our problem? The latter, surely, if we conceive our business to be that of doing our best for children of a given amount of ability. But, as we work, our purpose easily narrows itself into "getting so much learnt this week," and then the children's dulness becomes a hindrance and a handicap.

The conception of hindrances does not always give us ultimate truth—it is picture-thinking, and adjustable. Still, it is a picture which stands for something real. The more we fall into concentration on a special piece of work—a useful and wholesome attitude in many ways—the more this category of chains and hindrances recurs. It seems worth an experiment in thought. Let us use it, then, in order to see what comes of it in religion.

I

One use of it is easy and common but clearly wrong. We conceive the hindrances are dividing us from God. He is free and above us, we think, and we are chained; we struggle towards him and cannot reach him. We must get so much good work done if we are to please him, and we cannot

get it done. Whatever is true, this idea is false. What is true, then?

In the first place, I suggest that when we picture the universe as a world of obstacles, we ought always to picture God as being with us in the midst of them. If chains and hindrances exist, God bears them. It is his work in which we are hindered, and he is hindered in us. The chains of our fear, our stupidity, our ignorance, bind him. His expression through us is obstructed by our bad memory, our irrelevant worries, our delicate health, our hatred of beginning work. Defects in the organisation of school and of society hinder him. He is handicapped by foolish fashions, and by our past and present faults and mistakes. He in us is tied and bound with the chain of our sins.

Secondly: He is in prison and we can come to him. Every good deed, outside us or within us, works towards setting him free. He is in prison in the neglected child, in the school that needs reform, in the ignorant and unsympathetic parent, the irritating pupil, the irritable fellow-worker. He is in prison in the weakness of our self; and every patient strengthening of our feeble mind and will, and every cutting away of a false opinion or a bad habit, strikes off one of his chains. He is in prison in a badly organised so-

ciety. It is said sometimes that improvements in social machinery are valueless, because all good depends on character. Yet the answer has been made, that social machinery may roll away the stone from the grave of Lazarus. Yes, and more; it may roll away the stone for Easter.

But thirdly, the work of liberation will never be finished while time lasts. One chain is broken; we go a little further, and we find that a longer chain still holds us. We take up a new and greater work, and the new obstacles are greater than the old. Christ comes out of the grave to enter into the hearts of cowards and heathen.

Consider the spirit working upwards through inorganic nature, through the plant, through the animal, always against pressure. Nature developed up to man—God was in prison and man came to him; and man gave him new freedom and also new bondage, a new death of the soul as well as its resurrection from the dead. The higher the being, the more intricate are the difficulties of the greater work. This is the law of the universe, that *all work is done with chained hands.*

Last month I saw the moving pictures of the Battle of the Ancre. The description said, "At the signal, the troops leap forward." When the picture came, the leaping translated itself into

crawling, hampered by the rifle, up a cliff of mud, and then plodding and stumbling over an endless distance of impossible ground. This is war.

We had "The Lady with the Lamp," and our vision and our school descriptions of Saint Florence Nightingale; and then Sir Edward Cook's great biography translated our abstract into the concrete, and we saw the despotic invalid woman of genius, struggling with obstacles within and without, wearing out herself and others in the effort to correct what was wrong. This is saintship. Saints are not a different kind of people from ourselves, nor are they walking on any different kind of road; they have only gone a little further, and the road is no smoother further on.

School sermons sometimes speak of home (in contrast with school) as a place where there are no misunderstandings, no coldness or difficulties, no oppression and no distrust. It is an abstract that brings out some elements of truth; but a home in the concrete—the actual group of brothers and sisters and parents—is something much more complicated and much more moving. It is a group of human beings holding together at best, held together at worst, through friction and hindrances; pathetically holding together. The bonds of companionship are sometimes ropes for

life-saving and sometimes fetters, and continually they are both on the same day.

In Europe now we see, working out before our eyes, what a Revolution really is: the shifting stumbling-blocks, the grouping in twilight, the conflicting aims of the parties, the entanglement of ideals, the showers of advice and criticism and misrepresentation, the dangers that have to be painfully avoided, that may have to be gone through and paid for. Liberty is established only by chained hands.

II

We try sometimes to paint the hindrances as the work of the devil. "An enemy has done this"; and an enemy is not so irrelevant or distracting as a disagreeing friend. Sometimes we can use this device, but often it seems much too simple. Think of plants struggling with each other for room, with the weather alternately helping and hindering each of them; or a rabbit bringing up her young, hiding them from the stoat who wants them for her children to live upon. On whose side is the devil? Again, that which hinders now has often helped before; a bodily organ, or a system of theology, or a social institution may become a hindrance in the end, and yet may have stood for a great advance in its day. The rope

helps us up before it pulls us down. The knot had to be firm if it was to help us, so we take a long time in untying it now. And it may still be helping in some quarters while it hinders in others. And it is tied not only round our hands but round our hearts. Even if that were not so, we should find it tied round other people's hearts which themselves are tied to ours. Walt Whitman tells us to examine everything that we have been taught, and to reject everything that conflicts with our own soul. We have to do a good deal of that, but there are few who find it an easy process or a painless one. You remember Stevenson's fable in which all the people torment themselves by wearing a fetter on their right ankle, and Jack thinks he has only to strike down the magician to cure it all. He does strike down the magician, in one beloved shape after another, and finally kills him. Then Jack goes home, and he has killed his friends also, and everybody has begun to wear a fetter on the left ankle.

And sometimes, up to the last moment, our prison is not only a prison but a shelter, or something more. Fetters may strengthen us if our strength grows by means of our efforts to break them. The statue imprisoned in the stone is also the stone asking to be made into a statue. The baby's prison may be its mother's body which

gives it life. It may be right to break prison, yet not right to say that the devil built it.

Sometimes we say instead that God built the prison; that he sent the obstacles either for our punishment or for our training. There may be truth in that picture also, so long as we remember that in doing this God must tie his own hands as well as ours.

At any rate the prison and the endless prison-breaking are the law of the universe. And the God of such a universe can only be a bearer of chains.

III

Perhaps our image of God living in the sky is one of those which hinder us now though they helped us at first. If we use that image still, we must complete it:

> "For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

If he does sit in the sky, his feet are chained to the earth. We think of him sometimes as able to shake it off so easily, to withdraw at any moment from an obstinate nation or an inhospitable heart. Hosea taught us the opposite many centuries ago—*"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"* We and God do not find it easy to get away from each other. And the real point is

that we do not ever get away. He is involved in everything upon earth; bound up in it hand and foot.

I have found this sometimes—that when one has been thinking of Europe's hungry children and then turns to "say one's prayers," there is a certain feeling of meanness in it, as of turning one's back upon a great agony to look for private comfort. There is certainly something wrong about the image here. Whatever view we hold about feeding the hungry, we cannot be turning away from it when we turn to God.

"Why does God allow a great war, even one?" people ask. I think we get nearest the truth, amongst short answers, if we say that he could not help it. When the weakest elements in our self or in humanity get into a tangle, then the best and the strongest have to work it out and pay for it. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." The greatest self in us, and the best in mankind, is the bond-servant of the rest—the chained slave. But however we think of the authorship, there is no doubt where the suffering lies. If you picture God as Love standing outside the fighters, then by virtue of love he must suffer with every one of them. If you picture him as immanent in them, then in the courage of the men on both sides, in the loyalty

of the women on both sides, in the patience of the animals and the children, God is enduring. He is torn in pieces, divided against himself—or not against himself, perhaps, since splendour and tragedy on opposite sides do not destroy each other—but still divided; rent and broken. "This is my body which is given for you."

His body is given in the social struggle. It is given in the long agony of the working-out of moral or religious thought, in one soul after another. "What is it right to believe?" "What is it that we ought to do?" Many of us must have known times when it was the indecision and the dimness that seemed the worst burden of all. We could stand up to our task, however painful, if we could only be certain. "We cross the river on stepping-stones of uncertainty," I have heard a man say. "And," he added, *"we shall not get easily out of our world of difficulties."* On such lines, and by such means, worlds are made.

God's body is given, once more, in every struggle and constraint and sense of imprisonment within our own nature. We do not often recognise it at the time. Our impulse is that of mere hate and rebellion and attempt to escape. "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" We hope, perhaps, that it is our fleshly body which hinders us, and that we need only die to be rid

of it in a moment, to leap into freedom and heaven. Meanwhile here we are tied down by our weakness of will, by our lack of concentration, by our nervousness, by our ill-temper; by mistakes, not now to be undone, which have shut us into a trap of circumstances; by misdeeds present and past. And we cry out, "Art not thou our God who settest the captives free?" "Of the pitifulness of thy great mercy loose us."

Our prison warders will disappear only when our souls die, because the life in us both is the same. Freedom does come at times, and for a time, through the disappearance of a prison wall. But for the most part we only dig through that wall very slowly and with a great deal of pains, and then we find another wall beyond, to the end of our lives. "We shall not get easily out of our world of difficulties." The immediate freedom is of another kind; it comes, not through losing the prison, but through finding company. If we are shut up within our own mood and our own nature and our own circumstance, God is in that same prison, and we can come to him.

"We must break this chain," we say impetuously; and then after a time, despairingly or frantically, "We can't break it." We must drag it with us, and work in spite of it, until it is worn out; but we can make the god within us take up

its burden. Every self that we have tries to resist burdens and slip them off, except the god in us. We can cast all our care upon him.

This it is for us, and for humanity, to be prisoners and yet free. We are "up against a stone wall," and it may take more than our lifetime and more than the whole of time to destroy it. Yet even while they stand, "stone walls do not a prison make," if God is on this side of the wall. The cell we share with him is a home and a palace, an office and a factory,—General Headquarters.

V

OPPORTUNITIES

"Serving the opportunity."—ROMANS xii. 11 (marginal alternative in R.V.).

"Gathered together . . . . to serve."—PSALM cii. 22

I

THE texts seem specially appropriate to a school. A course of study or teaching is one of the things that people do call an opportunity. Here it is, and we are meeting a number of persons whom we never met before, and we are finding new offices and duties and pleasures and new subjects to learn; and, besides all these, we are finding new qualities and powers in ourselves. And all these are gathered together for a time and will work together for a time, and then they will separate again. Just this combination, of these persons and objects and qualities, has never happened before in the history of the world, and will never be repeated.

But this is true not only of a marked-out time like our school work; it is true of every day and

hour of our lives. Always we have a unique combination; certain persons, certain selves within these persons, certain circumstances and features of the world, gathering together and going on for a while and then parting; a movement within the everlasting flow and change which is also the eternal universe. For we look at time very unphilosophically if we think of each day and hour as wiped out as soon as it has passed; and I do not mean only that the effects continue. The successive parts of life are not pictures on a slate, each in turn wiped out to make room for the next. They are pictures on a moving canvas, and each is real eternally, even if we were annihilated as soon as our painting was finished. To-day these persons and these things and these occasions are gathered together, to create together a part of eternal life whilst their meeting lasts.

We are to "serve" this opportunity, says St. Paul, if the reading is correct. The first idea, for some of us, may be rather that I have to make the opportunity serve me; it is "my" opportunity, my property to use for my own benefit. But St. Paul seems to think it is less my property than my charge. I am to take care of it and do what it asks or needs, lest it should be lost. I and the day meet together, and from our meeting we have to make the finest bit of life that we can. We

are to be fellow artists and good partners, and the egoist is apt to be a bad partner and a bad artist.

In another respect also our egoism drops away. An opportunity usually means something that comes to us over and above what we have made and earned. We do speak sometimes of "making" an opportunity, but more commonly it is not my earnings but my luck; free grace in my hands. I earned my scholarship, I might say, and so "made" my chance of going to college. But did I earn the excellent teaching of the one who prepared me, or my good health which enabled me to work, or even my liking for the subject? Was it my prudence and foresight that chose parents who would keep me at school? Did I make the donors of the scholarship wealthy, or give them the enlightenment to use their wealth in that way? Did I establish the college? did I create the learning and the friendship that made it rich "beyond all that we desired or deserved"? My desert and my earnings shrink, in comparison, to something very insignificant. If once you begin to count and analyse, then, as the mission hymn says quaintly, "it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

Each must judge for herself, but many of us, I believe, must admit this. Often enough we are

grasping and ungracious. "I ought to have this." "I deserve to get that." If we can measure our deserts, I at least have had so much more than they could bring me; so much that had nothing to do with what I deserved; opportunities heaped up and poured before me. I have needed only, as we all need, to wait upon them and to serve them.

II

Perhaps we do not often realise how much of our actual life is of this kind—not making or even earning our materials, but using them as they come. Consider the small experience of trying to write an essay. We search for thoughts and come again and again to wait for them, and put our minds into a state of expectation for them, and we catch them as they flit through our minds, and we follow up one in the hope that it may lead us to another; and when we have enough we put them together and use them. This is how the process feels to me; never creating thoughts, but finding them and serving them. Or consider even our power of conversation. When I was a girl I was miserably oppressed by my own shy silence; and a woman who had suffered in the same way advised me to make a habit of speaking out the stray thoughts that passed through my mind. It came somehow as a new idea to me, that to

"make" a remark depends on thoughts that you do not make but find, and that even the best talkers are only waiting on thoughts that come to them, and giving them words.

In small matters and in great, we live by waiting on our material and co-operating with it as we can. A little of that material we earned or deserved, for good or evil, but most of it, for good or evil, goes much beyond that measure. Here, new every day, is our opportunity, our partner, our chance, our charge. What can be made out of our meeting?

Here are all of us, gathered by chance, to work for a while together. Shall we make amongst us a good and happy year of the school life? Surely, yes. We shall fall into groups as time goes on; we shall have some superficial cross-purposes and friction, since we are still so imperfect. But persons of good will can co-operate underneath the surface friction and in spite of it. I have seen a tangled disagreement where at last the wisest person in the group tackled the disputed point, and they settled it and worked well afterwards. I asked how it was done, and she said only, "I was sure we *meant* the same thing."

Here for each of us, again, is the group of personalities which make up her own self; personalities which sometimes seem not to be meaning

the same thing at all. I may or may not be responsible for their gathering together in me; I did not make myself in the beginning, though I have partly made myself since. But whether I am responsible or not, here now is my opportunity. These selves within me, these moods and emotions and impulses, these qualities with their strength and their weakness, different from hour to hour, these must make each hour their picture on the moving canvas, their bit of eternal life which no one else can make, "ere to the wind's four quarters I take my endless way."

Or consider our bodily nature. I am to serve my body, to keep it in health, to keep my face cheerful and peaceful even when I feel gloomy, and so far as I do this "my brother the body" will give back health and peace to my soul, as far as can be—"soul helping flesh no more than flesh helps soul." Or remember all our little brothers and sisters, the inanimate things. You keep your room dainty and orderly and clean, and you know then how when you come in tired and ruffled the room quiets you, and your bed puts its arm round you at night. In this once more we are less egoists than we think; we do not demand, before we let these things comfort us, that the room and the bed shall have been thinking

about us and holding out arms to us in particular. Our meeting was the opportunity, and we made of it what should be made. "Here is peace," says the room, or the house, or Nature, and we enter in. The lovely autumn came to us, and we and it together made that part of eternal life which consists in the love of something beautiful. Every season, every day of our lives, comes to walk with us for a little way, and we work and play together.

This is the great gift of friendliness towards life. "The battle of life," we say, and we sometimes think of life as being the enemy. Mary Cholmondeley describes an old woman who "had the tight-lipped, bitter look of one who has coldly appropriated as her due all the good things of life, who has fiercely rebelled against every untoward event, and who now in old age offers a passive, impotent resistance to anything that suggests a change. She had had an easy, comfortable existence, but her life had gone hard with her, and her face showed it." But life is our chance, our comrade, our fellow-worker, our fellow-player in wrestling. "Boys and girls, come out to play," it says to us, and we answer according as we are spiritually sensitive in the first place, and courageous in the second place.

III

We need first sensitiveness of hearing for the call; perceptiveness and wisdom of spiritual judgment. Where we are careless or thick-skinned or self-absorbed, we fail to notice that any occasion is calling to us. The person who is unperceptive of other people's feelings, for instance, will miss half the facts in the situations that he meets, and will go comfortably blundering on without ever knowing the damage he is doing on all hands. Good manners are based on the tact, the sense of mental touch, which feels the situation and fits it exactly. And the wisdom which works out the right answer in a complex question of conduct is only a wider and more reasoned exercise of the same discernment. When we have to decide day by day in the holidays between doing our college work and helping our mothers, or when in term-time we have to fit social duties and friendly duties and intellectual duties together, no abstract rules can help us very much; each situation must have its own problem worked out for itself. Long ago, when I was much troubled about problems of this kind, I remember an older person saying that we ought to take broad views of life and not fuss about details. That is the natural view for wholesome maturity, but I still think it is not much good to hold it up to youth except as a hope for

the future. The skilled and practised person does not fuss about details so much as the beginner, but the beginner can hardly help it if he is attentive at all. Also I think a girl student has problems of conflicting duties which are quite as difficult as most that she is likely to meet afterwards, and much more incessant and pressing than most of the later problems are likely to be.

All we can do is to judge the concrete situation as well as we can, and then refuse to fret about it afterwards. The Church itself can only sum up virtue as doing my duty in the station of life to which it shall please God to call me, and that station is unique for every person in every hour. Inner discernment grows with practice and is blunted with lack of practice, even in its highest forms of wisdom, and depth of insight, and wide and delicate response. The persons we reverence most have practised a long time and used a great deal of experience before they reached that excellence of judgment and control of will which can meet a situation, new or old, and do exactly the right thing.

IV

Such persons have practised the other quality also; they have been, or have made themselves, not only alert and attentive but courageous.

Whether they felt faint-hearted or not, they have met the call of the opportunity. They have "gone out to play."

The friendly and serviceable attitude towards life is also of necessity the courageous attitude. To meet with friendliness the difficult as well as the easy event; to serve and save the hardest situation; to treat pains and fears and burdens as opportunities; this is the work of a very gallant person, and the more afraid the more gallant. "Facing facts," or "making the best of everything"—these are implied in serving the opportunity, but they are also synonyms for courage. If discernment is the inner delicacy with which we know a situation, courage is the inner energy and momentum and staying power with which we meet it. It is the concentration which keeps the present clean for its own work, useless worries about the past and fears about the future being laid aside or at least held aside. Courage, with wisdom behind it, makes that wonderful and precious kind of person who, you know with certainty, will not fail you.

To the courageous person's friends and fellow-workers his courage appears as restfulness and strength. To the person himself, it may rather be akin to feeling as weak as water, only, in spite of all weakness and emptiness, trying to keep his

face turned one way. The strongest person in the world lives from hand to mouth because life is so much stronger than he. At the margin of our living, we have no power to meet the situation till it comes, and then, if our will is right, we have it. Whether we have "earned" that power or not we find hard to calculate and rather irrelevant. When we look back afterwards on such an occasion, the power may appear a good deal more than any of our earnings. Courage, once more, is not only staying power but adventure. Middle-aged people tend too much to think of duty as something ordered and settled—the following of lines laid down. It had a more exciting side for St. Paul at any rate, all his life. Duty is the filling of a station that is always new; it is meeting an opportunity that has never occurred before; it is meeting with new comrades and new materials and co-operating to make the best result possible. We are standing yet in the first morning of creation.

V

A fine thinker has spoken of the experience of a craftsman in handling "clay, or metal, or wood, or molten glass. It is alive in your hands, and its life grows or rather magically springs into shapes which it, and you in it, seem to desire and

feel inevitable. The feeling for the medium, the sense of what can rightly be done in it only, or better than in anything else, and the charm and fascination of doing it so—these are the real clue to the fundamental question of æsthetics."* In reading this passage I thought first, This might be the description of good teaching—the class and the lesson coming alive in the teacher's hands and all three carrying on the work together. Next I thought, it is like good committee work or good administration—"the state of things" alive in the hands of governors so sensitive that they feel in it the desired and inevitable shape, and so skilful that they can help it to take on that shape. Finally, it is the description of the whole art of living—"the feeling for the situation, the sense of what can rightly be done in it only, or better than in any situation else," and the skill and courage to do just that. I have taken ourselves to be the craftsmen and our circumstances the material, but the point is that both sides co-operate, and we might turn the image the other way round, and make our spirit the material on which life works. Be *fervent* in spirit, says our translation; glowing metal, ready to run into the shape that is needed and to hold fast there.

We have returned to the thought of comrades

*Bernard Bosanquet, *Lectures on Æsthetics,* p. 60.

working together in creation. The fundamental condition is that they must "mean the same thing." The craftsman feels and helps the desire of the material, and the man doing right is he who feels and helps the needs of the situation, the will of the grouped facts. If your will is at one with the need of the universe, then co-operation at bottom cannot fail. "Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field."

The craftsman and the statesman, the teacher and the mother, and the good soldier and the great leader, all in their own departments know the sense of having their wills at one with the will and need and purpose of what goes beyond themselves. In religious experience we know this behind every department. In such moments our will has gathered up the need of the whole world, and is in tune with the endeavour of every helper and saviour of the world. In such moments we feel without any argument that, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, all is well with us. All matter becomes our material; all obstacles are opportunities. The whole of life is our great opportunity, not earned but given. We wish one another good luck for the year, but in such moments we know that we cannot have bad luck—that all is safe.

"We have found safety with all things undying,
The winds, and morning, tears of men and mirth,
The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.

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Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all."

VI

CHILDISHNESS

"When I became a man, I put away childish things."—1 Cor. xiii, 11.

I

This is the only passage, in our English translation of the Bible, in which the deprecatory word "childish" appears. It seems to stand for something not bad so much as defective; something which appears naturally at the beginning of growth, but which in the course of normal growth ought to be put away. "That which is in part," St. Paul calls it—it ought to give way presently to the fuller and clearer reality, "that which is perfect."

His use refers primarily to the intellectual side of life,—to knowledge as a child has it, wavering, piecemeal, confused. We use the term even oftener of the passional side. A man is "childish" when his desires and impulses are piecemeal and uncoördinated; when his purposes waver because desires carry him now this way and now that way;

when he cannot subordinate the need of the moment, or the fear of the moment, to deeper needs and deeper fears. We think of a child specially as being helpless to coördinate and systematise. He is small, and he is down amongst things that are bigger than he. His passions and his circumstances, his desires, the elements in his nature and the objects in his world, stand all round him, and they are too big compared with him. He cannot see over them or see round them to get them into a plan; each must possess him in turn on its own account. His world and his self have plenty of material in them, but the material is "all anyhow." The world and the self are "unformed."

"Little by little, as we grow up, we come to be more of a match for both. We grow taller, and get our heads above them and survey them, and understand the form that they should have. It is "not good form" to snatch other people's toys, or to scream when anything annoys us: it is "childish" to let a small fear stand in the way of a big purpose. Standards of life, and manners and conventions—even the rules of a game—are instances of ordering through organisation. A baby cannot play a game, either in the literal or in the wider sense. The ordinary duties and pleasures of our lives, and great passions and

revelations, all help us to grow up if we take them worthily. By their means we learn, and we create, the *shape* of life.

II

Now the difficulty is that we grow up unevenly. To the day of our death each of us in part is a child.

To keep the rules and customs of a game, we said, was a piece of grown-upness as far as it went. We may make ourselves keep them, and yet have bits of our nature protesting all the time. We don't want to break rules, perhaps, but we may want to go against all good form by accusing the other side of breaking them, by carping and quarrelling, by audibly or visibly criticising the umpire. In refraining from doing any of these things, we are forcing into shape impulses within us which are still untrained and unshapely. We have preserved that possibility of playing games, of having decent relationships on the playing-ground, which the child within us would break up, not realising what he destroys.

We may keep rules by force in the wider field of manners and conventions. We may be civil when all the childishness in us is kicking and wanting to be rude. Of course if the civility were no more than a disguise,—if we intended to give expression to our worst feelings, or even to do an

injury, as soon and as publicly as we safely could, —then it would be "bad form," which is worse than no form at all. Yet "no form at all' is bad enough in any one above childish age. People give it finer names sometimes in their own case; they call it "straightforwardness" or "downrightness" when they have given way to all their impulses and given free passage to all their careless words, and flung about unpleasant sayings and detracting opinions which are sure to hit and hurt somebody. They are as downright as thoughtless little boys throwing stones about in the street. The genuine grown-up endeavour to be loyal if only to the outward forms of courtesy and consideration—this helps to keep safe the shapeliness and rightness of civilised life; even though the little boy inside us should have to be held back by main force all the time.

Sometimes it is not a matter of holding back, but rather of taking by the shoulder and pushing forward. The child within us hangs back and hinders us; it feels shy or frightened or awkward; it "doesn't like" to do something that is required. When the whole of us was a child, our childish fear or shyness paralysed the whole of us. But now the child is only part of us and the grown-up part can go on acting; so that the child often settles down presently, finding that no notice is

taken. This maintaining of decency, after all, is a surprisingly large part of grown-up life. We feel frightened and reluctant, but if we don't show it the company is not disturbed. We may be unwell, but after childhood we don't talk too much about our ailments and our symptoms. To the end of our lives we shall have impulses which are unshaped and untrained, which do not want to obey. Inside they will be disorderly, but if we can keep them in outward order the greater part of the situation is saved. We shall always need at times a certain effort and decision; a "putting away" of the childish things.

III

Sometimes it is our understanding rather than our will which needs to grow up. Let us consider a tangle in family relationship—the difficulty which one sometimes finds in getting on at home. Somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five, a girl at home may go through a time of real unhappiness and bewilderment. In such a period we feel "down amongst" things that stand round us and block our view. We can't see over them; can't get the right form. We can't do right in other people's eyes, and they can't do right in our eyes. It may be a time of much friction and discomfort for all concerned, and of real misery for some.

With the normal well-meaning family, it is growing up that cures this. By and by, gradually, if we are honestly doing our best, there comes a time when we begin to get our heads above the circumstances and the relationships, and are thus able to have a different attitude of comprehension. We can see over them, see how things are, and then we can make allowances. A small child looks up to his mother and supposes her to be perfect; he quarrels with his brothers and sisters when they are not perfect; but a grown person must make allowances if he is to live in a community at all. And here the childish habits may make it hardest at home. We learn to have a tolerant understanding, and mutual give and take, and mutual help and forgiveness, with friends of our own age, but we find it harder to practise these with brothers and sisters, and hardest of all with our parents. The childish belief that one's mother is an angel becomes the demand that she shall be an angel, and then turns to resentment and bitterness when one finds she is a human being,—bitterness greater than any we should feel for the lapses of an ordinary friend. When we were little, our mother was not angry with us for being imperfect creatures. She had the grownup attitude from the first; she could see over us and understand us, and help and forgive. There

comes a time when we must learn to be inwardly motherly, even towards our own mother.

This may be a most difficult adjustment to make, especially if it has to be made without much help from change of outward circumstances. Temporary separation—going to college, for instance—may help. Taking a position often helps. Marriage would help, only for other reasons it ought not often to come so early. But it may be difficult in spite of any of these. When we are young we feel that our parents ought to manage it; they are older and more experienced; they ought to understand and to modify the relationship, even when we can't. If they would behave differently to us, we think we should behave well to them. Yet we must remember that of this particular stress they have little more experience than we have. Their experience, these many years, has consisted in being the parents of a little girl, and now they have to learn to be parents of a young woman. In this new business, they may be as much children as ourselves, and as much puzzled and hurt. We all have to learn to grow older together, and to be gentle with one another whilst we are doing it.

IV

We may take another example, of the need and

the difficulty of growing up, from our experience of fussed-ness and obsession in general. When we are fussed, we are down amongst our circumstances. Our world as a whole is not formed, not in shape, because some group of things is standing across our way all out of the pattern, using up our attention and blocking our view. We are losing control of them and of ourselves. They seem much bigger than they really are, because we are below them and they are shutting out the background. It is the frequent losing of background, or the habitual working without a background, which characterises the person that we call childishly fussy. The person of concentrated mind gives equal attention to the objects he deals with, but he still sees the big landscape in which they take their place. The fussy person does not see the landscape.

The business of putting away this childishness is certainly one that never comes to an end. Yet as we grow we can become saner and more wide-seeing in one region after another. Effort and decision can do something; the stirring up of self-respect; the inward insistence on keeping a "mind above the mind," and on identifying our self with the wider vision even when it is dim and wavering. Faithfulness to outward form will help here also; behaving as if we were sensible even when

we are not. We can call on such strength and sanity and good sense as we have, refuse at any rate to remain sitting down on the child's level. "Stand upon thy feet," said God to the prophet, "and I will speak unto thee." The course of experience, again, does much, if we will use the experiences that come to us. The growth of large and stable interests does a very great deal, creating a large world and a wide background for us. We are far less likely to care disproportionately about little things if we care greatly for big things. The religious person, a child towards God, should be the most fully grown up with regard to the world.

V

And the line where we still lose our sense of proportion we may take as the boundary of our dominion so far, a boundary which is to be pushed further. We find ourselves children just at the growing point. If we no longer felt childish anywhere it would mean, not that we were fully grown-up, but that we had stopped growing. We feel ourselves childish and unformed, helpless among circumstances or among our own impulses, not when we are simply helpless and unresisting as a baby would be, but when the form is struggling to impose itself on the matter, half there and not wholly there. All this holds still of the

last example that I shall take—that of a passionate and rebellious desire—such a passion as jealousy.

It is common to say that a child is "self-centered" by nature. The phrase is a bad one, since there is really no one centre in his desires; each impulse works from its own centre and gets what it can for itself. Growing up means a gradual creation, out of the many impulses, of a reasonable plan of life; and in good growing up that plan will be an element in a larger design—the common life of a group, or of a great society, or of the whole world. But because we never finish growing up, because the form may be always becoming wider and richer and gathering up more of the matter, and yet will always find more to gather up, therefore at boundary and growing points, and coming up from lower levels, we shall find desires still unformed and unfriendly, which refuse to enrich the design with themselves; which cut across it, hurting and hindering our other purposes, hurting ourselves as much as they hurt other people; striving on their own account for their own isolated end; unable to reach it and unable to change it; starving themselves for lack of fulfilment, and willing to starve others. Such a passion is jealousy; the bitter childishness which may take us by the throat even far on in our growth, even when we are old.

The person who has tried to conquer jealousy knows the fundamental effort of the process of growing up. He has engaged in full consciousness in that struggle which stays mostly below the threshold of consciousness; the deadly embrace of the deepest elements in himself, of a form and matter which should be lovers and cannot be friends. He will have experience enough, if he stands up to it. He must do what he can to grow in every part; to get a wider world and stronger interests that may draw the balance away from this obsession. Faithfulness to the outward form, here once more, is a great matter. If we cannot help hatred and bitterness inside, we have done much if we can observe decency and keep them to ourselves. It may easily be that the struggle never will come to an end of itself. It may have to go on until it is solved, independently of our direct effort, in the natural course of life. Meanwhile all we can do is to keep our head up; to take every means to help, and then, having done all, just to stand; or at any rate to keep on getting up again when we have slipped down.

VI

We have spent much time in developing a text which perhaps was hardly more than a chance illustration in St. Paul's mind, and we may gain

by looking back at his context before we end. The preceding chapter treats of social organisation, good form in a society. You are to fit into the design, St. Paul says—understand that hands and feet and brain of one body are not each to fight for its own good, but each to help the rest in its own manner. Let every one desire to have the great gifts, certainly, but be reasonable and recognise that everybody can't do everything. But besides this reasonableness, "I show unto you a still more excellent way." And then follows the great description of the one organising factor which, from childhood to old age, on earth and in heaven, "never faileth." In the small child who restrains his noise because his mother is tired; in the mother who suffers long and is kind; in the boy who plays the game and keeps his manners, and "does not behave himself unseemly"; in the woman who is not worried and not provoked, because she is living in a bigger life than her own; in the man who fails in his endeavour and yet "envieth not"; in all these Love is grown-up.

I have spoken of growing up as meaning an increase in height, a power of surveying and grasping our world, seeing its shape and mastering it. To Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century there came a glimpse of the appearance which we, and our world, and everything about us might

have for one who could see all over it. "The Lord shewed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazel-nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as me seemed; and it was as round as a ball. I looked thereon with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' and it was answered generally thus: *'It is all that is made.'* I marvelled how it might last; for methought it might suddenly have fallen to nought for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: *'It lasteth, and ever shall: for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God.'*"

VII

POWERS OF DARKNESS

"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-lords of this darkness, against spiritual beings of evil in the sky above us; so take to yourselves the panoply of God."—EPHESIANS vi. 12 (T. H. Glover's translation).

I

ST. PAUL was writing to people for whom the universe was full of spiritual beings of all kinds, with all manner of titles—Princes and Powers, Elements and Rulers—beings for the most part hostile to man. Through life and death they were watching to entrap and destroy the soul. Paul does not oppose this conception; rather he assumes it; but he encourages his readers to believe that in the strength of their Leader and Helper they can overcome all the hosts of darkness.

We are far off now from those crowded Eastern towns of the first century, with their confused heterogeneous population, and their queer mixed thought gathered from the thought of every race.

Perhaps none of us believe just as the readers of that letter believed, in the multitude of supernatural beings—persons embodying forces of evil. But the forces of evil are real enough still, and it may be worth our while to look at some of the things that Paul said about them for the help of his various churches.

For even if we do not believe in personal demons, still it may be useful to personify deliberately. To give a name to a spiritual force—to image it concretely as an enemy or friend—this gives it a vividness and solidity which may make it all the easier to deal with. The forces of evil may be called Principalities or Thrones or Dominions, or by any other name we choose. They are the spirits of What Should Not Be.

Paul speaks, as to his audience it was natural to speak, of "evil spirits in the sky above us"; and elsewhere in a similar connection he speaks of "things in the sky, and things on earth, and things under the earth." These spirits live in this place or that place; they have local habitations as well as names. We can fit this also into our allegory, for the spirits of What Should Not Be will live, presumably, in the place where anything is wrong. The appropriate demons will be found on earth in dirty houses, and under the earth in faulty drains; they will live in schoolrooms where children are bullied, and in mills where low wages

are paid, and in places where people quarrel. A woman with a scrubbing-brush will be cleaning devils out of the room—yet Ruskin said that a woman, "by her office, and place, . . . is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial . . . But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence." It is a rare house, surely, into which the devil cannot enter; and he does not often wait to be asked in.

Devils live in the places that we live in, wherever the forms or the conditions of life are wrong. It is true, no doubt, that they can only cross the threshold of the house along with us—they need our companionship. They would not live in an empty house however insanitary, but they come to live there when we come to live there. This makes it a little difficult for our parable to follow the ancient picture in having evil spirits "in the sky." The clean empty sky, without any human beings in it, might seem to be a place that would also be empty of our accompanying adversaries. Still, if there are any intelligent beings living on other stars or other planets besides our earth, certainly the adversaries will be living there too. And if at the death of

the body our own souls set out on a journey through space, as so many of Paul's readers believed, it is true that their spiritual enemies would not be left behind on earth. We may see a good deal of truth in that vision of "things in the sky"; the vision of the presence of peril and the need of valour up to the very end of the journey—of shadowy giant figures rising round the soul even in its passage beyond the stars.

Meanwhile, we see the demons living alongside of us, in definite places, where there is any concrete thing that should not be. We meet them with strength of body and mind; with the whole armour of God; with scrubbing-brushes and spades and the opening of windows; with books and music and handwork lessons; with a new scale of wages; with prayer and self-sacrifice; with honest acts and clean words. In every good deed we are conquering some piece of territory, to hand it over to our Master.

II

Sometimes it may be hard to say exactly what that territory is. A spiritual being may be wonderfully skilful in creating illusions: he uses looking-glasses as we use them on the stage for ghosts and magic. In the classroom sometimes a crowd of demons seem to be coming and going amongst the children; yet we may suspect that most of

them are really lodging inside our own body, in tired brain-cells and irritable nerves. Sometimes such a difficulty may go on for years. We pity ourselves because wherever we live our neighbours seem to follow the same custom of doing us injuries and disregarding our feelings. Or we reflect that we have had a hard life because there has always been somebody—a different person at different periods of our life, but always somebody —who was an oppression to us, from whose presence we shrank, and the thought of whom in absence was a shadow over our other thoughts. Such uniform ill-luck seems to suggest that there may be a spirit inside us which has had something to do with it.

"This person and that person, and then these other people, have behaved wrongly towards me." This is our natural and impulsive description of the misfortunes of our lives. Then with the help of our guardian angels of reflection and criticism and a sense of humour, we may arrive at asking, "Was it really just these persons themselves? or is it the Spirit of irritability, or jealousy, or fear, with his foothold in my own heart, who gathered them up in his hands to tease me with them? If these persons had not been there, would he not easily enough have found others for his instruments? Have I been wrestling against flesh and blood, or against Principalities and Powers?"

If one has a special and enduring evil spirit of one's own, it is helpful by such reflection or by other means to come to know him. We may learn then, at any rate, that we must reckon with him in our life. We may go on changing our circumstances and our neighbours, but this neighbour is likely to stay with us through many changes. We shall have to reckon with him, and deal with him, and bear with him. He may leave us some day, when we are older, or he may not. He is of a constant nature, and very long-lived; perhaps immortal.

III

When a Power is at once so constant and so elusive, the business of fighting him becomes very interesting but also extraordinarily difficult. He has not only the gift of illusion but the gift of standing in two places at once, and we find sometimes that while we thought we were fighting against him we were also fighting vehemently on his side. You remember William James's description of the evil of unnecessary strain and the need of relaxing one's mental muscles, and how he goes on to say, "Even now I fear that some one of my hearers may be making an undying resolve to become strenuously relaxed, cost what it will, for the remainder of her life."[1] We fight fussily against

[1] *Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals,* p. 227.

our own fussiness, and crossly against our own ill-temper. We employ Satan to cast out Satan, and he is an unprofitable servant.

In the outer world also the Powers have a way of standing in double ranks, each facing his own image, so that the most valiant opponent if he takes his place hastily may find himself promoting his enemy's cause. A bracing teacher tries to cure a child of his timidity, and finds the timidity increase as a result of the treatment. In a newspaper correspondence, one man will write rudely to rebuke another for rudeness, and then each day will bring a new hail of insults from both sides. We try to fight poverty with free almsgiving, and homelessness with free shelters, and we find that poverty and homelessness increase. In every battle of our lives, in every quarrel in our business or profession, in politics, in every disagreement with our friends or with our enemies, we learn the elusiveness of the spirit of evil, and his skill in putting himself behind us when we thought we were attacking him. He disguises himself and he disguises us, so that our own eyes are deceived. We and he are clothed all over with right sentiments and good intentions. "Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing, therefore, if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works."

IV

It is not easy to fight with principalities and powers. A bishop has written of the European war: "What we are fighting—and the sooner we all recognise it the better—is a system and spirit which mean death to every nobler trait of humanity, and the destruction of all that we value as Christians, let alone as citizens of a free country. Don't let us lose sight of this. We are up against the forces of evil and a spirit loosed from Hell." We have to fight the devil where we see him, with any weapons we can find; yet it is terribly hard to be sure how much harm our bayonets are doing him. Poor flesh and blood wrestles against flesh and blood, and sometimes the spiritual beings of evil sit safe in the sky above us, and gather profit whichever side wins.

A woman said to me at the beginning of the war, "Of course I'm not so faithless as to doubt that we shall win; I have religion enough for that." It seems to commit one to saying that the conqueror has always been in the right; but pass that. If we win—when we win—shall we manage to prevent the world-lords of this darkness from recording also a substantial victory of their own? We may be entering, for instance, on a long term of years in which much will be lost that we have painfully gained in the past; a time when the

poor will suffer more and lack more; when the position of wage-earners will be weakened; when the care of public health will slip back; when the children in elementary schools will have less to eat; when schools will be cramped and stuffy and ill-furnished, and classes large, and the half-time age will begin even earlier. Any or all of these things may happen; one fears that some of them will happen. It is not absolutely necessary. If the war made us a really heroic nation, we might win even this battle; we might say that not one of us would enjoy an unnecessary comfort at the expense of lowering the care of children and the minimum standard of life. But I do not at present see much likelihood of our doing so. I fear that we of this generation are to enter a darker age than the one we were born in.

"The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide." The darkness is most real; "over all the earth until the ninth hour." Again and again in the world's history our Master is crucified and cast out, and it is three days before anyone finds that he is alive after all. Meanwhile, what home or shelter can we give him?

"Where a true woman is, there is home." Where a true man is, there is shelter. Where a true teacher is, there is civilisation. In our homes and our schools, shall we be able to keep a light

burning? to bring light to them that sit in darkness, even though the darkness grows thicker and thicker? or shall we relapse into walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air"? In the midst of that prince's dominion, we may offer a refuge and a citadel, in small human lives, for the persecuted God.

V

Or suppose it is an inward battle. Suppose that the power of the air seems to rule our own lives and our own hearts; that we are fighting in vain against our own cowardice, or egoism, or idleness, or ill-temper, and proving ourselves the slaves of these demons every day. If we are still fighting, then even in this defeat we are keeping sure and safe an inner fortress for our Master; the fortress of our will and desire and our refusal to make truce.

St. Paul certainly believes that we shall be able in the end to do much more than this. A person who is possessed by this dweller in the innermost will find, he says, that the evil beings cannot really stand against him at all. This spirit is "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." He paints the normal life of a Christian as a series of battles indeed, but also as a series of victories.

It is possible, he says, to live well; possible, not to get away from Satan, but to beat down Satan under our feet in the strength of God. "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power." "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

This is the glory which we hope will be fulfilled, and which we believe is fulfilling itself in many human lives. Meanwhile, however far off from it at times we and the world seem to be, however immovably the power of darkness seems to occupy our territory, still so long as the inner citadel still resists, and the inner light is not extinguished, God is unconquered and we are his soldiers. To an individual or a nation that is still endeavouring, however feebly, to live well, the besieging demons make in this respect no difference at all. A soldier besieged with his General may live closer to him than he ever did before. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

VIII

WITNESSES

"So great a cloud of witnesses."—HEBREWS xii. 1.

The writer to the Hebrews had a commemoration of all witnessings, all loyalties and martyrdoms, since the beginning of the world. (The word translated "witness" is the same that we have taken over from the Greek as "martyr.") We may blend our remembering with his. Let us commemorate deeds and words and thoughts that have lit up this shadow and all shadows, that burn against the darkness of the present and the past, that bear witness to the glory that can be reached by human spirits

We wish to remember and give thanks for all the small unnoticed shinings as well as the great ones, and the deeds of small men—even of men who in much of their life may have been small-minded and small-souled—as well as the deeds of great heroes and saints. Consistently splendid persons and splendid lives are few, but the touches of splendour in ordinary lives are not few. In

these last years a great strain has been put publicly on many thousands of ordinary persons, and the result, it has been said, is that a level of heroism which we thought was a sharp and lonely peak has shown itself as a great table-land. Thousands of ordinary persons are heroic—thousands bear witness, in loyalty or generosity or patience or forbearance, to what an ordinary person may achieve. But often we did not see it. We are too close, and we are inattentive; magnificence, like a picture, is easiest to see from a certain distance, and we may need to be prompted before we even look at it. Sometimes we see it first from a distance, and are confused when we see it close. We hear of a splendid deed, and then, meeting the doer, we find that he is in most ways an ordinary man and in many ways a faulty or commonplace man. We are very blind then if we drop our admiration, and fail to see the treasure because an earthen vessel holds it.

If we had enough of the divine vision, we should see and worship that treasure wherever it was found. We help our imagination by picturing it as it has appeared in a special place, and many of us probably were taught in childhood to use one picture above all—to worship and give thanks for the splendour of one Person, and to sum up all sacrifice and endurance in "the Cross

of Jesus." For other children, other pictures will have been added to this, and they will have been taught to reverence "the saints." But we need in the end more than reverence for saints; we need reverence for sainthood wherever it occurs; even where it is struggling in the same heart as the worst sins; even when it fails after an hour. The Captain of our salvation came not to block the rest of the army from our eyes, but to open our eyes to them.

But, says some one, we can only reverence what is perfect. Let it be so; but we have poor eyes if we see perfection only when it has a perfect setting. Is not the same divine spirit present and shining in the common soldier who in the midst of faults, for one hour only, is clinging to some loyalty? St. Paul saw the perfect spirit in the imperfect hearts of himself and his fellow Christians, and he made his own picture of it. "Not we live," he said, "but Christ liveth in us." "The Son of God goes forth to war," not in one man's body only but in millions, and for a million years.

The army wears all uniforms and is spread all over the world. If our mind will hold fast to this, we have a right to help another side of our vision by nearer and warmer means. We may allow ourselves and teach ourselves still to recog-

nise and personify the army in those members who are most nearly and warmly "our sort." To each person, given his special temperament and experience, certain figures are the most attractive and inspiring, and he may take these as his special picture of the whole. It may be an imaginary picture—it is quite possible for inspiration to come through a novel or a play. Or we may find the light shining first through some great historical figure, a saint or hero of the past or of our own day, who ennobled the world that he passed through:

> "He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;
> Us he chose for comrades, and this way went."

Apart from great leaders, one recognition is blessedly easiest in youth—to see the glory in persons that we know: our mothers, our friends, our lovers and our beloved. If love and hero-worship grow less as we grow older, it is not that we grow clearer-sighted. In this the young have often a special vision of the truth.

These are captains of our salvation, who have opened the door of heaven to us; for surely we are looking into heaven if there is suddenly lit up for us the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the noble army of martyrs. And these, or their fellow-soldiers and ours, are still making up that fellowship and that army. I have found

that it sometimes gives a new reality to hymns and prayers if one joins in them with this picture in mind; calling to mind deliberately such part of the army as appeals to us most.

When we join in the prayer for the whole army, we are delivered from our own selfishness. Our own difficulties seem so much less important when we have this landscape before us. We remain chiefly as givers of thanks, for that redemption of the world in man's spirit to which these men bear witness. And yet, transfigured, our own difficulties and our own business do remain. What we do with them becomes much more important because these persons have lived and are living.

"I must do this because such and such persons would do it." "I cannot do that because they would not." What exactly is the argument here? One form of it is, "I must do this and not that because I must be like them. I must become such another as they are." A child may often take that standpoint, and it is natural and right that he should. The boy in the morning of his life hopes to become before its evening what his knights and heroes have been. But as one grows older and fails more, perhaps the impulse, though no less binding, is apt to take a simpler and humbler form. We say not, "I must be like those persons," but only "I must be on their side."

"Are we worthy of what the soldiers are doing for us?" What can we answer but "There is no worth in us"? How can we be worthy of this part or of any other part of the great army? How can we be worthy of the million years of consecration? of the divinity in man which has worked since the beginning of the world? Our worthiness falls to the ground. There remains just this: that nothing is worth while on earth unless we are *on their side:* unless in our own little place with our feeble weapons we are the least of fighters in that army. The splendour of man constraineth us.

In our dealings to-day and to-morrow and next day with our small trials and our great weaknesses, we are to be of this fellowship. We, unworthy, drink in our tiny measure of the cup that these drink of. What should we do if we had nothing to give or to dare or to endure? if no race were set before us? What should we do in these days, which have only opened our eyes more widely to what was always true? "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of martyrs, let us run with patience" . . .

"Out under moon and stars
And shafts of the urgent sun,
Whose face on prison bars
And mountain heads is one,
Our march is everlasting till Time's march be done."

IX

THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD

"My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. . . . The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in."—PSALM cxxi.

"Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."—PSALM cxix. 117.

"I will lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."—PSALM iv. 8.

I

WE could find a hundred such texts in the Bible, and many more in religious writings of other lands and other days. To appropriate them to ourselves, we need not assume any miracles worked on our behalf, nor need we even do more than give the name of God to that spirit of law and faithfulness in Nature, and wise thoughts and brave deeds in conscious beings, which indeed has made the solidity of heaven and earth. We lie down at night protected by walls and roof. How many ages, of how many skilful hands and patient minds, were needed before men learnt to

build them. We lie down defended by the laws and their ministers, and by the honest and orderly customs of our country. Behind these lies a history which, through all distraction of faults and errors, is worthy to be called the history of a divine work. We lie down expecting food next day, with the ploughed field and the sowing and reaping behind it. Man and beast and the earth have worked together, and the Lord in them has built the house of our safety.

We go out in the morning under the same defence. The laws of Nature work with us if we will work with them, and will never fail us. Men long dead co-operate with us through customs and institutions and the sound learning which they have handed on. Living inventors that we never heard of, and physicians on the other side of the world, protect our bodies against dangers of which we seldom need to think. Our country's education and civilisation defend us. Errors and vices that might have been pressing temptations to some ancestor never strike us with temptation at all; so protected are we by a higher public opinion and cleanly ways around us. Difficulties with our neighbours that might have led to murder scarcely appear as difficulties, so much a matter of course do we find the customary means of solution that society has established for us. "Mere

machinery," we sometimes call these solutions. The Lord surely is in the machine.

And this defending God is within us as well as outside us. We are upheld by every year of our past childhood in a Christian home; by every good habit and good principle instilled into us; by every fine person we have met, and every good book we have read, and every beautiful thing that we have loved, since all these in turn have added their share to the defences in our character. We are upheld by all gifts of Nature that we received before we came into the world, and by all the training they have received since. Finally and chiefly, we are upheld by our present as well as our past; by that light and strength of reason, conscience, faithfulness, to which specially we have learnt to give the name of God dwelling in us.

II

We have spoken already, as the Psalmists spoke, of more than one kind of safety. We have protection for our body and for our mind, protection against suffering wrong and against doing wrong. Let us look specially now at the protection against doing wrong—the forces that keep us safe in the right way.

It is interesting to notice first that it seems possible for many people to use the defence piece-

meal. They turn on one or two of the side lights, not the central light; have "local" consciences and understandings. A man may have a professional conscience much superior to his private conscience; may put much more honour and courage and care into his work as an artist or a statesman than into his relations as husband or father or son. Or he may be a good husband and father and a bad employer; or a scrupulous friend and an unscrupulous man of business. Most of us indeed let our lives fall into separate compartments, some compartments managed better than others and some worse. If a good and careful public servant is a bad husband, or a good daughter is a careless teacher, we have no right to say that the goodness in the one compartment is not genuine. Every honourable purpose, however limited, and every sound interest or ideal upholds that part of life which it concerns, and may carry its strength some day beyond the limits of that part. If it is the Lord only who keeps us safe, then whatever keeps even a part of us safe, in whatever unexpected form it comes, must in so far partake of divinity.

We must never despise the side lights and the local consciences, if only because they supply so much of the actual day-by-day strength and guidance even in persons who have a more central

light as well. But the presence of a more central light adds a very great deal to the general trustworthiness of our lives and to their promise of growth. The "man that hath principle," in Cromwell's phrase, is the man with some ideal of life as a whole, however imperfect, and some purpose about it, however unfinished. Such a man is by no means the only one to give valuable gifts to the world, and yet you remember that Cromwell wanted such men in his army, rather than the most brilliant soldier who started only with an ideal of soldiering as such. The man "that hath principle" does not necessarily put his principle into words. He may even dislike and rebel against any form of words that he has happened to meet. Or it may be only at the end of his life that he can describe the lines on which he has worked, and his description then may be quite inadequate. And yet there has been a line. His life has been "straight," not merely from convention, but from an inner light and an inner spring to which he has more or less been faithful. Something at the centre of his will has held him up, and he has been safe—safe for all his leaders to trust and all his comrades to lean on.

Let us take this then as typical—the light and strength of a general reason and conscience and faithfulness rather than the more erratic and ec-

centric instances of a professional conscience only or a family conscience only. The person whom we feel it safe to lean on has not only special purposes but some general purpose underneath them. He wishes and makes some effort to do rightly in all the parts of the life he has to live, even in the parts that are not easy and not interesting and not congenial. He may fail very often, but we can trust him to try.

I do not know that he could ever trust himself. Which of us could venture to say that we answered to that description? Yet, though we would not trust ourselves, how shall we not trust that which we have found and tested? None of us, perhaps, can be proud of ourselves, yet nearly all of us have had the blessed fortune of good parents and good friends, and have had good seed planted in us which we did not sow. Is it not true, then, that nearly all of us from time to time have formed some such purpose as I have described, and have tried a little to carry it out? Ever since we were little children in a good home we have truly wished, now and then at any rate, to be good children. When we thus wished and when we thus tried, did we not in actual experience find a strength that upheld us and a house of defence? and do we not in actual experience still find it?

This God, within us and around us, is our defence upon our right hand if we choose to fight upon his side. Inside or outside, of course (the alternative is largely a matter of words), he is anything but a defence if we choose to fight against him. But if we enlist, even for an hour, on the side of the good life, we are in touch with a source of strength which upheld the first conscious being who ever tried to do better, which has upheld every hero and martyr since; the spirit in man which through the ages has saved humanity —our help in ages past and our hope for years to come.

III

In whatever terms we explain or describe it, this strength is there for our use. We have as much claim to choose to be on the right side, and then as much right of access to the forces on that side, as any one who has ever lived. We, as much as any early Christian, can live here and now in the strength of the Lord. We may feel keenly enough that we have no strength inside us when we begin; that we have scarcely any power which is independent of our choice of side. This is a very old experience, and it was said long ago that it is "to them that have no might" he increaseth strength; "the daily strength, to none that ask denied."

We sometimes fail to use this strength because we ignore the fact that it is there. In a book written by a doctor I read lately an account of a nervous patient who was tormented by his recurrent yielding to a temptation. "Do you pray about it?" asked the doctor. "Yes indeed," said the patient, "I pray for hours at a time; I pray till I am exhausted, and then immediately I fall again." "But," said the doctor, "you need only ask once. When you have asked once, then you have the strength, and you need only give thanks for it and think no more of the matter." I have since tried this plan, and have found that in certain difficulties it has an almost magical effect. The advice has good grounds, whether we think of it as based on theology or psychology or both.

A connected difficulty in prayer, I have found, is that we imagine we cannot avail ourselves of the source of strength until we feel it. We seem to be trying to break through the wall of our own weakness and dryness and stupidity, and to be unable, until we can break through, to reach the power to which we appeal. But in theology and psychology alike the idea is wrong. There is no breaking-through to be done first—God is on this side of the wall. Where there is a soul with the feeblest desire for right, there, in that exact spot, God is.

I used to think it most unfair, when I was a child, that we should be told to thank God when we went right and to blame ourselves when we went wrong. Later, we find that these phrases express a real and deep-seated experience, though it may be difficult to put it into other words. Perhaps it is that when we are going wrong we are separate and single, set up against other beings, because we have become at odds with the spiritual purpose which works in us and in them. In this position, anything in me is "mine" in the way of hot private ownership. But when we are trying to do right we are in line with that great purpose and drawing on its strength, and we feel that this strength is not merely "mine" but accessible to everyone, and that we and all others would be empty vessels without it. We are cowards trying to be brave, and we pray, "Eternal Courage, strengthen us." That spirit which has upheld saints and martyrs is to uphold us in our little trial—that mind is to be in us which was also in Christ Jesus. This is not my mind or my spirit in the sense in which my cowardice or wilfulness or caprice was "mine." Yet in another sense it is far more mine than these were, being that for which I was made.

IV

And still we fail. Since early childhood we

have prayed and tried, and yet things go wrong and we go wrong. In what sense, then, can we really lie down in peace? In any sense, is the available grace sufficient for us?

It is a very real difficulty. The strength of the Lord, it seems, protects us from suffering wrong —protects us very often, but not always. It protects us from doing wrong—very often, but not always. How is it, in face of these apparent facts, that every form of religion is still bound up with the thought of an absolute liberation and perfect safety?

It is a safety, the religious person claims, which is not postponed till after our death but can be gained at any moment, here and now.

> "Let me to Thy bosom fly,
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high."

I have seen this described as a cowardly utterance. It is Charles Wesley's hymn, and the Wesleys were not apt to avoid storms, nor did their religious position help to keep them out of storms. A person of very keen and individual devoutness in any age is likely to be led into storms rather than out of them. A Mohammedan legend relates that the disciples of Jesus wished to build him a house, and he was to choose the site. He

pointed to the wildest waves on the lake, and said, "Build my house there."

The safety which Charles Wesley looked for had little to do with defence against suffering wrong. It probably had a good deal more connection in his mind with defence against doing wrong, because he seems to have believed in the possibility of individual perfection. "Take away the power of sinning," he wrote in another hymn. But surely there was more even than that in his experience of safety. His brother at any rate, and others from the beginning of religious history, have found peace in the Lord, whilst yet believing that they were frail human beings and would never be able or be enabled wholly to avoid sin.

Is it something like this: that we find rest for our hearts by throwing them on to the side of all that is good or great, heroic or beautiful, in the universe? It is not that we claim or hope to be great or heroic or beautiful, to be permanently sinless any more than to be permanently unhurt. But all in our self that we have power over we put now on that side, at that service. And in this, here and now, we have salvation.

We do not claim or hope to be great. We hardly claim or hope to be good, or at any rate we claim it in one of its senses only. "Is this a good child?" a new teacher may occasionally ask,

and the former teacher answers with regard to the child's habitual success in obedience and diligence and good temper. All that we can say of ourselves, if goodness is used in this sense, is that we will try once more to be better than we have been. But there is another sense, in which a baby comes after a conflict to say, "Bobby is good now." This we can say, and this, in the teaching of every great religion, is the essential. For the examiner or the judge, this change in the child may be a small matter; for the mother it is a great one. They are friends again; details may still go wrong, but all is well at heart because love is healed between them. This is Love's test: are we good now? friends now? And we have long been taught that it is by studying human love that we obtain our clearest knowledge of the spirit of good in the universe.

This parting of our will from the past and future weakness in us, throwing ourself on to the side of the best in our self and in the world, is something which appears fully and clearly only in human beings, yet which seems to have beginnings in the higher domestic animals. A stone or a plant cannot choose sides at all. An animal can do so as regards the outside world. Can he do so as regards himself? Can he recognise a better and a worse that are both contained within him,

and throw himself on the side of the better? Not with any clearness, certainly, yet lovers of dogs may claim that a dog in a dim way may have real repentance; that he may come to make friends with an offended master as a baby comes to make friends after wrong-doing. Probably we have no right to draw a hard line to exclude any creature that can feel love. Full and clear repentance would involve clear vision that what we have been doing is a poor thing, and that we turn from it to something greater; but for the baby we can hardly claim a vision so precise as this. One cannot imagine that he turns his eyes exactly on the action over which he and Mother fell out, and judges that Mother was right and he was wrong. Repentance with him is rather a turning from one whole world to another whole world. He has found that the world he chose was poor and unsatisfying, and without being able to analyse all his reasons he runs back to the other world which contains Mother. In the fuller repentance of our later days we understand more clearly, but there is not much difference in this fundamental turning; the division and rebirth of the self; the coming back of the will to the deeper love. If we admit this in the little child, we can hardly deny it altogether in the dog who turns from the sullenness and snappishness in himself towards the

world which contains the love of his master. And if even a dog can thus have some experience of repentance, he will have following on it some experience of salvation. His heart can rest in his lord—in the divinity which he can see plainest.

V

We have been calling up a very old doctrine: "Repent, and be saved." Salvation has had other meanings, and we need not quarrel over the use of words, but this seems to be its central meaning of all. Repentance and forgiveness need have nothing to do with escape from any legal punishment, whether inflicted by man or by a government higher than man's. Punishment may or may not follow, but repentance in itself involves willingness to be punished and is consistent with desire to be punished. Repentance desires not escape from punishment, but the healing of love. "Turn, and you are saved"—not safe from the suffering of wrong, not safe for ever even from doing wrong, but safe now from being wrong; safe in fellowship with all that is good; in the peace of the Lord.

This would be much even if "Safe *now*" meant limitation to a certain time. This day or this hour would be saved, consecrated, lived in friendship with that which is perfect, even though other

days were lost. It would be much even if it were limited to one part of ourself. A man repents of one kind of sin and overlooks another, as we all do; then one part of his self would be redeemed whilst another part was still "in the flesh." But the matter is deeper and more complex. In the moment of true repentance, by the formal turning of our will, we throw upon the right side everything over which we have power. We offer up the future and the past, and our whole self known or unknown. And this is not annulled by the passing of the moment. Our common philosophy of time fails us here—we have dipped beneath time into eternity. "This *is* life eternal, that they should know thee."

This, and only this, is the inmost house of the strength of the Lord, whose door always stands open; our Eternal Home even while troubles last through the ages. Or, in the other metaphor, this is to put ourselves in line with the divine life which flows round us and through us; to make its desires our own. "Let me to Thy bosom fly," to hide my heart in the heart of God.

X

THE DESIRE FOR EXPERIENCE

"He asked life of thee."—Psalm xxi. 4.

I

The desire to live, to know, to experience, runs for many persons all through their years, and runs through the earlier years for nearly all. From the baby crawling across the floor, through the boy climbing over a wall, up to clearest consciousness in the youth on the threshold of manhood, and through all the adventures of his prime, man desires fulness of life. It is always a right desire. If we go wrong in working it out, it is not that we have sought too much for life, but that we have sought it by inadequate means; that we have gone up a blind alley, or that in hurrying to satisfy some small and clamorous bit of nature we have pushed aside something bigger and deeper.

We wish to live and experience, at first, with no further reason,—the wish speaks from every instinct that is growing in us, and it needs no ex-

plaining. But as we grow it expands in clearer consciousness and begins to express itself in more detailed words. Powers and qualities in us are standing unused, and we begin to think of them and to wish to explore them. We desire experience, we say to ourselves, in order to find out what is in us. That desire also is right, and the gradual finding out is very interesting. Only we never arrive at a final answer, because what is in us is not a fixed quantity. Life does not only test and polish what is already there; it goes on making us. And it makes us not into closed vessels, but into channels and organs and instruments for the "Eternal Ideas" and for all the life and power in the universe. If by sheer egoism a man succeeds in so closing his eyes and ears and twisting his soul that he is no longer a channel for anything, then we soon perceive and say that there is "nothing in him." He is a closed vessel and an empty one.

If we are to find out what life can make of us, we must be willing to grow and be made. To be obstinate or hasty or headstrong interferes with growth, and perhaps with many of us a self-conscious timidity interferes still more. A valuable hymn speaks of the Christian as "content to fill a little space, if Thou be glorified." But it is often hard to find people who are content to have

that littleness shown up. We are willing to be small in the background, but to be small in the foreground is too much for us, even if nothing can be done until the foreground is occupied somehow. If we are to live, we must stand where we are wanted and hope that we may grow to fill the place not too badly.

II

From time to time we shall find pain in this growing, and in this submission to the spirit that girds us and carried us whither we would not. But pain is not to be avoided by any refusal to grow. And in the abstract, at the centre of our will, we are not generally cowards in youth. When we think of the general question, we do not wish to shirk the pain that must come in the course of experience. It is the particular trial in the concrete that makes us so oddly surprised and incredulous and resentful; and when this comes, I believe one can often find help by generalising it. "I am disappointed . . . Do I wish to be the only person in the world who is never disappointed?" "I am tormented by this weakness of my own. . . . Do I claim that, unlike all the rest of humanity, I should be dispensed from all weakness?" "Do I wish the great work and warfare of the universe to adjust itself so delicately to me that

no battle, inward or outward, shall ever involve pain of mine?" We do not abolish the pain by such reasoning, but I believe that many characters can diminish by its means the surprised and selfish resentment which makes so great an addition to the pain. "This is an ordinary part of common life, of the main current of life. Do I ask that only the selected pleasant parts should come my way?"

Or we may look on it in the light of our desire to learn from experience and to be made into something better than we are. "Do I really wish that nothing should ever go wrong; that I should always succeed in my undertakings; always be pleased with myself and have every one pleased with me? How smug and ignorant and self-satisfied and useless I should become." I have found this thought so valuable for my own use that I was all the more shocked by a horrid distortion of it that I met the other day. A woman wrote, "When I hear people rejoicing over the fact that their lives are going smoothly and happily, and that they are having altogether a delightful time, I often wonder if it is really a thing to be so very joyful over. We don't progress much in such a life, do we? . . . I am afraid I am no believer in the theory that a long-continued easy time is altogether a thing to congratulate oneself over."

Surely the people who rejoice that they are having altogether a delightful time are the rare and delightful people who do not "sit down upon their handful of thorns." Let us enjoy the good things when we have them, and then let us try not to grumble too much when we lose them.

We ask for life, and we hope to be able to take life as it comes. "To this God you ought to swear an oath, as the soldiers do to Cæsar. . . . What shall you swear? Never to be disobedient, never to make any charges, . . . and never unwillingly to do or to suffer anything that is necessary."

III

Let us consider further the idea of learning from experience and being made by life as we go on.

As in our childhood so all through our lives, if we shut our minds against learning we shall not learn. If we shut our hearts against some destiny, and go through it resenting and resisting and dragging back, then the great waves of experience may drive over us and toss us up and down, and leave us closed and empty and inexperienced to the end. To learn from life, the first condition is an inward acceptance of life. It is hard to find other words, and all words may

be misinterpreted, yet surely we do all know the difference between inward resisting and inward accepting. Let me quote an appeal by a fourteenth-century preacher to that knowledge in his audience, in relation to one of the hardest kinds of experience.

"There is an exceeding bitter myrrh which God gives, namely, inward assaults and inward darkness. When a man is willing to taste this myrrh, and does not put it from him, it wears down flesh and blood, yea, the whole nature; for these inward exercises make the cheek grow pale far sooner than great outward hardships, for God appoints unto his servants cruel fightings and strange dread, and unheard of distresses, which none can understand but he who has felt them. And these men are beset with such a variety of difficulties, so many cups of bitterness are presented to them, that they hardly know which way to turn, or what they ought to do; but God knows right well what he is about. But when the cup is put away, and these feelings are stifled or unheeded, a greater injury is done to the soul than can ever be amended. For no heart can conceive in what surpassing love God giveth us this myrrh. . . . We come and complain, 'Alas, Lord, I am so dry, and it is so dark within me.' I tell thee, dear child, open thy heart to the pain, and it will do thee

more good than if thou wert full of feeling and devoutness."*

"Open thy heart." It need not mean going on always with feelings which perhaps ought to end, or sitting down before circumstances which perhaps we ought to alter. But it means taking our life as material to be accepted and dealt with, as a companion to be received and perhaps helped, not as an enemy to be fought and hated. It means, in short, just that difference which all of us know in practice from the inside, between the heart open and the heart closed. Often we deny the name of life to the apparent enemy. Of the trivialities, of the dusty road, of the cloud of disappointment, we say, "This is not life, and we want to live." We say of the kingdom of life, "Lo here," and "Lo there," and it ought to be within us all the time. Only if we open our hearts to life can its heart be opened to us.

IV

Within this acceptance lie discernment and selection and differences of use. A ray of light falls on an emerald. Some of the rainbow light in the ray is absorbed into the stone and stopped there; some is passed through it; and the green light, isolated and pure and lovely, is singled out and

*Tauler, *Sermon for Epiphany.*

given back to the eye. Even a stone thus selects from its environment, responding to one part in one way, to another part in another way. A plant distinguishes much more variously and richly; an animal much more still; a man most of all. Even on the lower edge of our consciousness, even within ourselves, we select. Some modern psychologists lay much stress on the half-conscious processes which allow one thought or impulse to pass into our mind, which make another change its form before it can gain full admittance, and which repress and shut out a third. Dangers lie in this repression—in treating part of life as an enemy. We are safer when we manage to accept it, perhaps in a changed form.

One kind of discernment is used socially when we say in practice, "Let this part of experience be passed on to the world, and let this other part end with me." We act as conductors for some vibrations and non-conductors for others; we are sometimes the pedal that prolongs resonance and sometimes the other pedal that stops it. Sometimes, indeed, one meets with people—perhaps in a class or an audience—who seem to be non-conductors and anti-resonators for everything we can think of; but really everybody passes on something, good things or bad. We know the proverbial story of the man who receives an

annoying letter at breakfast, and so is cross to his wife, who presently goes shopping and is rude to the shopman, who relieves himself by scolding an assistant, who scolds the errand-boy, who quarrels with his sister, and so on perhaps for ever, unless the series can end in a blessed non-conducting mind that will bury in its bosom the rebukes of many people.

V

This power of wise discernment and management of pedals ought to grow with length of experience. What else ought to grow? On the whole I think that, when we improve as we grow older, it is chiefly in the region of wisdom and skill. The flame of high desire, the mountain visions of life, may be present as fully and richly in early youth as in any of our years, and youth indeed fears often that these may die out as years go on. Wordsworth's lines are too well known to quote, and I will quote instead from Alice Meynell's "Letter from a Girl to her own Old Age."

"O fainting traveller, morn is grey in heaven.
Dost thou remember how the clouds were driven?
And are they calm about the fall of even?

. . . . . .

Suffer, O silent one, that I remind thee
Of the great hills that stormed the sky behind thee,
Of the wild winds of power that have resigned thee.

. . . . . .

Listen—the mountain winds with rain were fretting,
And sudden gleams the mountain-tops besetting,
I cannot let thee fade to death, forgetting.

What part of this wild heart of mine I know not
Will follow with thee where the great winds blow not,
And where the young flowers of the mountain grow not.

Yet let my letter with thy lost thoughts in it
Tell what the way was when thou didst begin it.

. . . . . .

I am sure the misgivings need not be justified. If we care for mountains and are willing to climb them, the paths of middle age will be as splendid as those of youth, only not more splendid, because that early glory can hardly be overpassed. Passion and generosity, courage, aspiration, may come into life full-grown. What should grow as we grow older is the width and richness of the world on which these are to work, and our skill and steadiness in bringing the two together, bridging the gulf between the central glory and the concrete details of life.

Our aspirations can be no higher than they were in youth, but we may grow in the wisdom which translates them and the perseverance which carries them out. Our intuition and inspiration may be born full-grown, but not the reasoning judgment with which we supplement them and prepare their way. The passion of love for a person or a cause was perfect in youth, but the loyalty with which we can work for it may grow as long

as we live. Love had his path ready made through impulse and emotion, and we lose much indeed if ever we let that early path become overgrown. But it is a path along the hillside, narrow though lovely, and it is easily blocked by a fall of stones or the overflow of a stream. Love would be cut off far too often and far too long from his issue into our life, if we had not made him another road by the levels of reason and faithfulness and steady understanding; a road which we can make smoother and wider every year. Faithfulness is part of the making of this road, and patience and tolerance and charity are other parts. It was often the avalanche of impatience that blocked the hillside way. We had sensitive and fiery fanaticisms; we saw unpardonable sins: "they *ought* to refrain from this at least, it is so easy to refrain." Every one of us has classified mankind, using our little footrule which seemed so obviously right, damning the sins we had no mind to. Experience ought to bring us slowly to believe something of the almost incredible pronouncement, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."

VI

That is, it ought to bring us there if we will be brought. These mediating virtues can increase every year, but we know well how terribly also

they may shrink. As we grow older we may grow not wider but narrower, not steadier but more fussy and fretful and fickle, not more loyal but more fault-finding and more apathetic. We have not the least right to assume that we are better than ten years ago because we are different. The divine powers in our heart, we hope, never wholly die so long as we live, but their old path into life may be overgrown and the new road may never have been made, so that our heart is cut off from our living. And the more years we live without our heart in it, the more ignorant we become and the smaller and the more helpless.

But this is not a dreadful chance—a disease that may come on us against our will. There is no need to be afraid of the years ahead. "Oh that I knew if I should persevere," said the saint in the story, and the voice answered, "If thou didst know it, what wouldst thou do? Do that, and thou shalt be safe." To learn from life, all we need is the will to learn. "One small part of me wills to learn, but the rest is indifferent or frivolous or self-satisfied." Then let that small part of me take hold of however small a part of life, of an idea or value however incomplete.

"I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball—
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall."

We need not be troubled by our own indifference. We may fear that we shall play with life, but the God of life will not play with us. We need not be troubled by our self-satisfaction. Why fret over what will fall into dust at the touch of his finger?

God without and God within, and I the meeting-place. To ask to be exempted from the common lot of battle and trouble and joy would be asking to be exempted from himself. To be willing to grow and be made is to will that he should grow and take shape in me. To find out what is in me is to find out what is in him. "Prove me, test me, question me," we are saying when we ask for life, but it is he in us that must answer his own questions. Life is God's proving of me, but that means nothing else than my proving of God.

THE CLIMBERS

Great was the mountain,
And God on the height of it.
I must go venturing,
Affront all the might of it.
Up where the clouds blow,
By great woods swelling;
Over rocks and over snow
To His white dwelling.

Morning shone royally,
No one need to tarry.
One slave along with me
With burdens to carry.
Into the forest way
Steep and green-lighted,
Till the wood's dark array
Held me benighted.

Days and nights held me there,
Dim days unreckoned.
Leaves prisoned all the air,
Undergrowth thickened.
Strange creepers wove a screen
For my undoing;
But my slave's axe was keen:
He taught me hewing.

Out from the wood at last
Half-blind I stumbled.
Flood-like the whirlwind passed,
Dull thunder rumbled.
Then the slave pointed high—
Clear through the thunder
God's throne against the sky,
Whiteness and wonder.

Weary was the fell's length,
Stonier and colder.
I must use my servant's strength
Over crag and boulder.
Weak I grew, slipping back
As we crept higher.
He found the sheltered crack
For the night's fire.

Then from the hill of hope
Chasms divided me;
Down the rough sliding slope
My comrade guided me.
Scarce could I stand or cling,
Trembling and thwarted;
Only in his arm's ring
Leant I supported.

I had not reached the snow
When I sank dying.
Loud storm and daylight low,
No use in crying.
But my slave smiling stays
Where I had thrown me.
"Child," he said, "these many days
Have you not known Me?"

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